

HEAD OF THE LOWER SCHOOL



DOROTHEA MOORE

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HEAD OF THE LOWER SCHOOL



JOEY STOOPED A LITTLE, AND PUT HER MOUTH TO THE CHINK

HEAD OF THE LOWER SCHOOL

BY
DOROTHEA MOORE

ILLUSTRATED



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press

1920

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TO
WESTHILL, EASTBOURNE
WITH MY LOVE
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

P R E F A C E

THERE is in England a large and interesting county, mostly green on maps. We call it Lincolnshire.

There is a part of that same county where you see the gleaming silver of the Wash—so fatal to King John of unpleasing memory—and the green marshlands are drained by wide dykes, and stakes stand bunched at intervals along the low-lying shore to break the fury of the sea, at the great high tides of spring and autumn; and the river that meanders through the “Deepes,” as these marsh flats are called, has no banks when the tide is full, but seems as though its waters brimmed, and only kept themselves from sloping over by an amazing steadiness of hand in which you are not wise to place implicit trust.

That is “Little Holland.”

Where the ground begins to rise a shade, so that the great mass of dim red buildings seems to tiptoe in the rolling sea of green, stands the famous Redlands College; where everyone, from Miss Conyngham the Head—are you brave enough to ask her?—down to Tiddles the school

PREFACE

baby, will have something to tell about the thrilling story which acted itself round about Little Holland during Joey Graham's first term in the Lower School. And, let me tell you, they are proud of that story at Redlands. Here it is! Gabrielle or Noreen would like to tell it, I know; but you'd better let me.

DOROTHEA MOORE.

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CHAPTER I

LUCKIE JEAN'S ODD-AND-END SHOP

"There was a small kid called Jennie,
A millionaire with a penny;
But this her disgrace is
She blued it on laces,
And so all the rest hadn't any!"

"**B**UT Joe *isn't* Jennie," objected Bingo, as Gavin chanted the last line of this lyric in a cheerful jigging sing-song, and a voice that would have done credit to a cathedral choir.

"And Mums wanted me to get shoe-laces," Joey added. "You see, these haven't any tags, and the ends are all frayed out."

"What's wrong with stiffening up the ends with Bingo's play-wax?" demanded Gavin the resourceful. "I never thought that *you'd* come to spending the one penny going on silly shoe-laces, when we have to go to Luckie Jean's

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odd-and-end shop, and might have bought bull's-eyes, or at least pear-drops."

Joey cast a glance down at the very dilapidated laces securing her shabby shoes. Her indifference to her own personal appearance was supreme, but Mums had seemed worried about those shoe-laces, and it was a point of honour in the Graham family to protect Mums from all possible worries. All the same she agreed with Gavin: it was a waste to be going all the way to Crumach and Luckie Jean's odd-and-end shop without so much as a penny to spend among the five of them—Gavin, Ronnie, Kirsty, Bingo, and herself. She considered the question.

"But Joey isn't Jennie!" objected Bingo once more with determination. Bingo never left a question till he got an answer; even when Gavin smacked his head for bothering, which happened now and then. Father—the big, cheery father to whom the five had said their last good-bye one chilly morning close on two years ago at Crumach Station—had called Bingo "the little bull-pup," because you couldn't make him let go.

Gavin knew that, and answered the objection. "Why, you little ass, Joey won't rhyme with anything, that's all, and Jocelyn's even worse. And of course anyone can see who's meant, because

Joey's the only one of us who has so much as a brass farthing to bless herself with."

"And she's going to spend all her farthings on boot-laces," observed Bingo sorrowfully, and the corners of his mouth went down. Bingo was only six; that was his excuse—and he was the only member of the Graham family who had been known to cry for years. They hadn't got a tear out of Gavin when he fell off a hayrick and dislocated his shoulder, and it was put back by the local bone-setter—a process which is far from pleasant when unaccompanied by chloroform. Joey hastened to avert the tragedy which might have disgraced the name of Graham if Bingo were left in suspense too long.

"If you're *sure* that play-wax will fix up my lace-ends so that Mums won't worry, we'll use the penny on anything you like," she said.

Her words produced quite a sensation. Gavin patted her violently on the back; Kirsty jumped three times into the air like a young chamois, with a great display of long, thin, scratched legs—no one in those parts ever saw anything like the way those Graham children grew!—and Bingo hugged her ecstatically before burrowing in the pocket of his tiny knickers for a small and grubby piece of yellow play-wax.

They all sat down on the high heathery moor

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to mend the laces there and then. "Lots of time," Gavin pronounced, consulting the gold hunting-watch which Father had said his eldest boy was to have if he never came back. "The postman never gets to Crumach till four, and it's not three."

"But there may be soldiers come by the south train," suggested Bingo. "We'll want some time to see them."

"Heaps of time," declared Gavin, pinching bits off the lump of play-wax. "Only three miles from here to Crumach, and we can see the soldiers after we've done Mums' shopping and got the post, if we don't before."

Joey looked up from her refractory laces, shaking her thick fair hair out of her eyes.

"But *the* letter might have come by the post, Gav. If it has, Mums will want to know at once, won't she?"

"'Course. I'd forgotten that letter might have come," Gavin answered more soberly. "There, leave that lace to dry hard, old girl, and you'll have a topping tag. Did the minister expect it so soon?"

"He said he just thought it might come."

"Will it come if you've failed to get the scholarship?" Kirsty asked.

Joey considered. "I don't know, but I shouldn't think they would write to everybody

to tell them that they'd failed. Mr. Craigie said there were seven hundred and eighty-two candidates. Just think of all the stamps!"

The family did think, with a gasp. When they thought at all about money, it was as a thing which must be kept for boots and bread and margarine—never as a thing that you could squander recklessly on luxuries like stamps.

"No, I shouldn't think there would be a letter if you've failed," Ronnie agreed sadly. He had a right to be serious, for he was, after Joey, the person most immediately concerned with the all-important letter, which it was remotely possible that the postman might bring to Crumach to-day.

The five had always known that Father thought boys and girls should share alike where education was concerned. Joey was to have her chance at a big public school as well as Gavin and Ronnie, and Kirsty was to follow when she was old enough, as surely as little Bingo. But before Gavin had been two years at the preparatory, from which he was out to win an Eton or Winchester scholarship, the news came to the pretty house in Hertfordshire—a house which always seemed to strangers so bewilderingly full of children, dogs and cats—that Major Graham had fallen wounded into the hands of the Huns, during our last retreat

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in the anxious spring of 1918, and had succumbed to the brutalities of a prison camp in the land of Kultur. His private means had been sunk in an Austrian oil-mine, and were gone beyond recall; he had insured his life, and Mums was left to bring up five healthy, hungry children on the insurance money and her pension—somehow.

Father owned a little square-built stone cottage in a tiny Highland village, four miles north of Crumach. Living was comparatively cheap at Calgarloch, and they had spent the last glorious leave there all together. Mums and the family moved north, and in the rent-free cottage held a council of war to review their resources. Joey could see that picture now; Mums, very slight and fragile-looking in her widow's weeds, and the family sprawling about her, all long of leg and outgrown as to clothes, but fiercely in readiness to fight any notion on Mums' part that she might have managed for them better.

It was then Mums had explained that however economically the family lived in Calgarloch it was only possible that one child could be kept at school at a time. If—Mums stopped herself and substituted “when”—Gavin won his scholarship, Joey could go to school. Ronnie would have to wait until she left; Ronnie was

nearly three years younger, so waiting would be possible. Until Gavin fought his way out into a public school the rest of the family must be content with the village school.

"I'll get that scholarship, Mums," Gavin had promised, growing hot and red; and he had kept his word. The name of Gavin Graham had headed the list of Winchester scholars at the end of last term; and Joey's chance had come.

By that time the four younger Grahams had grown used to going daily to the little village school, where the pupils at most numbered fifteen, and the master taught "the Latin" with a strong Doric accent and an absolute enthusiastic love of all learning, which could not help communicating itself to the boys and girls in his care. He taught the secular subjects untiringly, and the minister, Mr. Craigie, poured the "Shorter Catechism," and much else, into the children twice a week so sternly, that it was at first quite a surprise to the Grahams to find him the best of comrades and friends out of school.

It was during a thrilling expedition to the loch for fishing—Shorter Catechism not so much as mentioned—that Joey confided in him to the extent of asking if thirteen and tall for one's age might stand a chance as a pupil teacher at "a proper girls' school." "For if I didn't cost anything, Ronnie could go, and he's over ten

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now, and would be fearfully old by the time I'm seventeen," she explained. "I suppose I could teach the small kids like Kirsty, and I could always punch their heads if they ragged in class."

Joey never could think why Mr. Craigie should laugh so helplessly at this suggestion; but he was very kind all the same, and said that he would see what he could do. What he did was to talk things over with the schoolmaster, and then to write a letter to:

MISS JEAN CRAIGIE,
Redlands College,
Lincolnshire.

A few days later he called on Mrs. Graham, accompanied by the schoolmaster, and with the answer to that letter in his pocket.

Redlands offered a scholarship once in every four years to be competed for by girls under fourteen; the scholarship provided four years free at the great fen-country girls' school, and forty pounds annually for books and clothes! He wanted to enter Joey for the scholarship, though the entrance examination loomed only six weeks ahead.

"She seldom remembers the Shorter Catechism, but the child has a brain," he said; "and what is more important, she has grit. I don't say that she can win the Redlands Scholarship,

of which my sister, the mathematical mistress there, writes full particulars, but I do say that she might, although the competition will be enormous. Let her try."

And Mums had thankfully said, "Yes."

Joey worked early and late during those six weeks, in spite of holiday-time for the rest of her world. She lived between the manse and the schoolmaster's, and the two clever men coached her untiringly. And then the sealed papers came down (by special permission) to Mr. Craigie; and for three days Joey, hot, inky, and anxious, was shut up in the minister's study, answering the terrible questions the examiners had set. And then Mr. Craigie packed her sheets of foolscap off to Redlands, and there was nothing left to do but to wait. She had been waiting now for ten long days.

The postman did not come to Calgarloch. People fetched their letters, when they expected any, from the little post office at Crumach; but the Grahams thought that no hardship; a walk over the corner of the moor, and across the lower shoulder of the hills that lay between Calgarloch and Crumach, was always fun, especially if there were anything to spend in the town. But to-day the comparative merits of bull's-eyes and pear-drops seemed unimportant; they were all thinking of the letter.

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Ronnie dropped behind with Joey when the shoe-laces were finished with, and the party ready to go on.

"If you get it, I could go to Christopher's this term," he said. "You know Christopher told Mums there was the one vacancy, and he'd keep it on the chance, because of Gav having done so well."

"Yes, and if you got a Winchester School like Gav has, in three and a half years, Kirsty would only be twelve just—heaps of time for coming on to Redlands," Joey remarked hopefully, and then, as a wave of doubt swept over her:

"But I'll never get it—out of seven hundred and eighty-two girls. I went some awful howlers, I know.

"P'r'aps the others did too," suggested Ronnie.

"I'm afraid Mums will mind if I fail," Joey said. "Of course she'll pretend she doesn't, and say all she cares about is my trying—but she won't take us in with her dearness."

"'Couse not; but you'll have to let her think she does," Ronnie announced, from the depths of past experience, and then he and Joey were silent while they plodded round the shoulder of the hill, and dropped down into Crumach. Ahead Gavin could be heard gaily discoursing

to Kirsty and Bingo on the Homeric exploits of Winchester "men"; but then it was different for Gavin. He had won his scholarship.

Either the shoe-laces had taken longer than the children had expected, or the gold hunting-watch had not been entirely reliable, for it was fully four o'clock when they turned at last into the main street of Crumach. Gavin stopped and waited for the other two.

"The post'll be in. We'd better go to Luckie Jean's first, and get Mums' things after."

As a matter of fact one got a good many of the "things" at Luckie Jean's, though Mums had a certain odd favouritism for the newly established grocer at Pettalva, who sent a cart in twice a week to Crumach and had biscuits that were really fresh. But the family plumped to a man for Luckie Jean. True, the fingers with which she ladled out your provisions were snuff-stained and not over-well acquainted with soap and water; but the recesses of her shop were so dark and mysterious, her goods so various and unexpected, and, best of all, her stories were so thrilling that no ordinary shopman who drove a cart could dream of comparing with her. The family trooped joyfully in a body to Luckie Jean's forthwith.

She had the post office, not so much on account of her competence, as because hers was,

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at the time the postal authorities had decided to open a branch at Crumach, the one and only shop there. Later, when a polite gentleman from Pettalva, rendered desperate by complaints from the English people who came up for the shooting, suggested politely to Luckie Jean the advisability of putting the charge into the hands of a younger woman, he thought himself fortunate to escape with his eyes still intact in his head. Luckie Jean, half blind and wholly ignorant as to all but local names and places, kept the post office; and English visitors went on adding to the national revenue by writing unavailing letters of bitter complaint.

It was this redoubtable old woman who looked up fiercely over her horn-rimmed spectacles as the young Grahams trooped in a body into the odd-and-end shop.

She was bending over the post-bag as it lay on the counter, sorting the letters and papers into little heaps, and keeping up a vigorous undercurrent of grumbling all the time.

"Na! na! You can't come worrying for sweeties now. Be off, there's douce bairnies. I'm busy."

"No hurry," said Gavin politely. "We'll wait."

And he began to wander round the shop, hands in pockets, attended by his constant adorers,

Kirsty and Bingo. Joey stood staring at the post-bag and the piles of letters, and Ronnie stood near her, breathing hard. It was no use to interrupt Luckie Jean when she was busy with the post-bag; it would probably mean ignominious expulsion with boxed ears, for Luckie Jean in a temper was no respecter of persons.

"Hillo! The 'Englishy' cake full of currants is gone from the window. You've had it there these three months—'member how I brushed the dead flies off last time we came, and cleaned it up?" Gavin remarked with interest.

Luckie Jean happened to have just come to the end of a pile, so did not fall upon him for interrupting.

"Ou ay. I selled yon to the Englishy gentleman, with the niminy-piminy voice on him, that's at the Widow Macintyre's up the street for the painting," she answered, with a chuckle. "Fine she'll recognise it, will the widow; she having tried to pit me off with ane of the bonnets she wore afore the deleterious trembles took her man, for payment when yon cake was fair new. But her lodger he paid a good Englishy price for it, and I don't take nowt back."

"He'll have to be hungry before he gets through it," Gavin opined; but Luckie Jean had gone back to her letters and took no notice.

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"Evelyn Bonham, *Esquire*," she grumbled; "what for should it be the Englishy way for to gi' a manfolk the name of a wumman? And staying at 'The Neste' near Crumach. I've heard tel of Nests. Yon must wait till I've cried on the tinker-body, as should be round in the tail of the week; that body kens a'body's business."

"I think 'The Neste' is that jolly little new house under the hill; we could leave it as we go back, Luckie, if you liked," ventured Joey.

Luckie Jean looked up at her consideringly.

"You keeps your eyes in your head, bairn. Maybe I'll trust you wi' it, but a postwoman must be gey particular, ye ken."

"I know," Joey agreed, in all good faith, though it was hard to attend to ordinary remarks like that when one was just trembling with eagerness to know what letters were for the house of Graham.

"You'll mebbe like to take a bit of a look at they scrawly anes as I've pit in the pile ower yonder?" inquired Luckie Jean, unbending still more. "There're what they cá's 're-directed,' but there's not mony writes plain for all their fine schuling, bairn. They anes 'ull likely need to wait till my niece comes from Pettalva, as have the gey expensive spectacles. . . . Na, lad-

die, ye'll not be distairbing the postmistress at her duties. Bacon—you canna be needing more—you had the half-pound Monday."

The customer, a small bare-footed boy, clasping a coin tightly in his hand, looked apprehensively at the postmistress. "But ma mith-er . . ."

"Be off, and tell your mith-er you've ate your half-pound far too quick," thundered the autocrat; but Gavin came to the rescue, stifling a laugh.

"I say, mother, can't *I* weigh it out for the youngster? You showed me how, ages ago."

"Ou ay, ye'll still be meddling," growled Luckie Jean over her post-bag, but she did not say no, and Gavin served her customer, and put the money into the till in a very professional manner.

Joey in the meanwhile got to the pile of redirected letters, and soon succeeded in sorting them, the writing in most cases hardly justifying the severe criticism of the Crumach postmistress. Then, at last, she ventured the question she had been burning to put all the time:

"Have you come on any for us yet?"

Luckie Jean, busied in making a final scoop all round the bag with her long, thin arm,

jerked her head in the direction of a little pile at the end of the counter.

"There you be—twa or three letters, and a newspaper for your maw. That's aal."

Five Grahams hurled themselves simultaneously on the little pile, while Luckie Jean tied the rest up in lots according to their destination. Gavin was there first; he looked and flung them down, one after another in deep disappointment.

"The blue one—that'll be from Cousin Greta—see the crest! The white one with the small, screwgy writing—that's from Uncle Stafford. *That's* a bill, and this is a newspaper; nothing from Redlands, Joey!"

Joey bit back a little gulp of disappointment.

"I didn't really think there would be," she said. "Can we leave any more letters for you on our way, Luckie Jean?"

"Ye'll mind not to get playing and forgetting of them?" asked the careful postmistress, and as she spoke she put a tied-together packet into Joey's hand. The string was insecurely fastened, and the eight or nine letters came to the floor in a heap—all except one, the bottom one, which stayed in Joey's hand. Luckie Jean's heading had been at fault again, for this letter—mixed up with Sir Henry Martyn's, and Miss Martyn's, and Captain Kingston's—was directed quite distinctly to:

MISS JOCELYN GRAHAM,
Pilot Cottage,
Calgarloch,
Near Crumach, N.B.

Something seemed to catch at Joey's throat, so that for a moment speaking was quite difficult. She always remembered afterwards the way things looked as she saw them then: the dusty, low-roofed shop, with its dim recesses, where brooms and brushes and oil-casks lurked; the choked windows with articles of food displayed; the open box of coarse cottons and crochet wools; the flitches of bacon; the gay tins of salmon; Gavin behind the counter; Luckie Jean closing the post-bag. Then Joey swallowed hard and opened the letter. This is what she read:

"The Trustees of the Redlands Scholarship Fund have much pleasure in informing Miss Jocelyn Graham that she obtained the largest number of marks in the recent examination, and the Redlands Scholarship has accordingly been awarded to her.

"She is therefore entitled to four years' free residence and tuition at Redlands College, and an annual grant of forty pounds for necessary expenses."

"I've . . . I've got it!" Joey said.

CHAPTER II

OUT INTO THE WORLD

EVERYTHING about Joey was new—from top to toe, from hat to boots—particularly boots. That knowledge was about the newest thing of all.

She sat in her corner of the third-class compartment, looking alternately from the window at the flying scenery of Scotland and then down at those boots—strong, unpatched, with superior unknotted laces, all quite new.

She was wearing the long, dark green uniform coat of Redlands and the soft, green close-fitting hat, with a band of the same colour round the crown and the school arms stamped in silver. Underneath she wore the dark green serge “djibbah” with white flannel blouse and green tie.

These things had come for her from Redlands a week ago, with the bill, which Mums had paid out of that amazing cheque for forty pounds—a cheque which Joey had been proud to endorse under the envious eyes of her brothers and sister.

The cheque carried with it an amazing sense of wealth, so it had been a blow when Mums firmly refused to allow one penny of it to be spent on anything but boots and clothes for Joey herself. However, Mr. Craigie (after some careful calculations of which the family knew nothing) produced ten shillings as a parting tip on the day the family were going *en masse* to Pettalva to choose Joey's boots.

That was a great day for Joey Graham, aged thirteen years and three months, for Mr. Craigie's gift was hampered by no restrictions. She proudly stood lunch to all the rest, *and* tipped the waiter—a seedy gentleman with a good deal of limp and dingy shirt-front, who was nevertheless an adept at putting cruets, Worcester sauce bottles, etc., over the stains on the tablecloth of the little back-street restaurant where they partook largely of sausages and mashed potatoes, limp pastry and ginger-wine, with Joey hospitably urging them on to further efforts. Even Gavin the Winchester “man” was no greater in the eyes of his family that day!

There had been very little time for inconvenient thoughts of possible home-sickness to obtrude themselves during those bustling days of preparation. Of course it would be strange to have two days' journey between herself and Mums and the rest, Joey knew; but people who

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have won a scholarship don't go in for being home-sick. Besides, there would be Miss Craigie, Mr. Craigie's sister—mathematical mistress at Redlands and a ready-made friend, Joey was comfortably sure.

So she made her own final preparations very cheerfully, and helped Mums—rather stickily—with the getting ready of Ronnie's shirts and stockings for his plunge a week later into Gavin's old preparatory; and said good-bye and thank you to the schoolmaster and to Effie and Ailie, the sawmiller's twin girls, who sat next her in class; and to Luckie Jean, who unbent to an extraordinary degree and presented a whole bag of "sweeties" at parting; and was finally seen off at Crumach by the entire family, with an old military portmanteau that had been Father's, and a bewildering quantity of new clothes in it.

Mums went with her to the junction at Pettalva; from there she was to travel in the care of the guard to Edinburgh, where Miss Craigie would meet her and take her down to Redlands next day.

Mums and Joey both found a tendency to leave little gaps in the conversation, as the roofs of Pettalva began to come in sight.

"I shall try to find someone who is going the whole way to Edinburgh, darling," Mums said,

after one of those gaps. "Then I shall feel quite happy about you."

"I'll be all right anyway," Joey said determinedly.

"Yes, my Joey, I know you will; but everything, including the travelling, will be a little—new."

"I know Mums. Don't you worry; *I* shan't," Joey persisted, though the roofs of Petalva were rather blurred just then. "I know it will be new, but I'm going to like Redlands awfully, and write you reams of letters, so you won't be dull—and—and"—Joey swallowed a lump in her throat—"there won't be such a heap of stockings for you to mend, anyhow."

They two were alone in the compartment; Mums caught Joey in her arms and held on to her tight. "Oh, my Joey, I *like* mending the stockings!" she cried, with a little sob in her voice, and then she tried to laugh.

"But I am going to love your letters, darling, and live in the interesting new world with you. Shan't we watch for the post, Kirsty and Bingo and I, and always be making excuses to go to the odd-and-end shop?"

Mums put away her handkerchief, and went on more in her ordinary voice:

"None of us have ever seen the fen country; you'll have to tell us all about it. And Cousin

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Greta said something about asking you out on a Sunday, now and then, and she has all kinds of beautiful things at her house that you will enjoy seeing."

Joey looked doubtful. Cousin Greta's infrequent calls at the old home had generally ended in disgrace for at least one member of the family. For Cousin Greta made no secret of the fact that she considered all the children a hopeless set of little raggamuffins, and somebody was certain to live down to her ideas. Lady Greta Sturt was Father's cousin and always spoke of the children as his only, though she put their faults down to poor Mums. She brought them the best chocolates when she came—such chocolates as were a rare and unaccustomed luxury even before the War—but the Grahams were not to be bought by chocolates, though it must be owned that they ate them with great speed and enjoyment. Joey wasn't sure that to be asked out by Cousin Greta would add to the joy of Redlands.

"You will be nice to her if she should ask you," Mums went on, in her soft, pleading voice, "She was very fond of Father and did a great many kind things for him when he was little, he always said."

"She's probably gone off, like Luckie Jean's Englishy cakes do," Joey said solemnly; but added, for Mums' comfort:

"Don't worry, Mums. I'll be as nice as I know how, and most likely she won't want me again after she's seen me once."

Mums smiled, and then the train stopped at Pettalva Junction, and the bustle of changing began.

Mums found a lady going all the way to Edinburgh—a cheerful, capable-looking personage who breezily undertook to see Joey safely into the hands of Miss Craigie at the Waverley Station. Then Mums bought Joey buns and two apples and a magazine, and reminded her of the packet of sandwiches in her pocket and kissed her silently; and Joey said, "Don't mind, Mums; I'm going to *like* it."

And then the train slid out of the station and Joey was off to the new world, and Mums was left behind.

That was the beginning of the long day's travelling down through Scotland, and now she was almost at Edinburgh, and the end. In a few minutes Miss Craigie would meet her—Miss Craigie, whom Joey saw as a replica of her brother, only in a coat and skirt—and she would be hearing all about Redlands, and learning what a new girl ought to know. Joey remembered from school stories that new girls need a lot of watching if they are not to begin their school career with unforgivable blunders. She

was very thankful that she was going to travel with Miss Craigie.

She was also rather thankful that this day's journey was nearly over. She seemed to have sat still for such a long, long time. Mrs. Tresham had broken it a little for herself by going to the restaurant-car for lunch; but though she had pressed Joey most kindly to come with her as her guest, explaining that she hated meals alone, Joey stuck to it firmly that she preferred sandwiches, having her own private supply of family pride. She ate her sandwiches—potted shrimp and margarine—and the buns and the apples in solitude; they didn't take long—nothing like as long as Mrs. Tresham's lunch did.

The afternoon was very long, but tea-time came at last, and she had been told to have tea in the restaurant-car. She and Mrs. Tresham had it together, at a little table, fixed firmly to the floor; and there was hot, buttered toast and a sort of mongrel jam, and you had to pour the tea carefully because of the lurches of the train. Joey enjoyed that meal, and it was five o'clock by the time it was finished, and she and Mrs. Tresham had reeled back along the swaying corridor to their own compartment; and at six they were due at Edinburgh.

Joey tidied herself up and washed her hands even before the Forth Bridge was reached; she

was so anxious to be ready in good time. And that wonderful engineering feat was crossed—with a certain thrilling and delightful sense of insecurity about the crossing—and Corstorphine Hill was passed, and the train was slipping into the Waverley Station. Edinburgh at last!

Joey was in the corridor in a second, looking for Miss Craigie. Of course it was not wonderful that she did not see her at once; the station was so big and the people so many. But even when she had got out, accompanied by the small suit-case containing her night-things, and by her new umbrella, and had stood quite a long time waiting and tiptoeing by the door of the compartment while Mrs. Tresham claimed the luggage for them both, still there was no sign of anyone who looked like Mr. Craigie's sister.

A stout, elderly woman stood at a little distance among the fast-thinning crowd surveying her unblinkingly, but Joey was sure that *could not* be Miss Craigie. Just as Mrs. Tresham came back with the luggage and a porter, this personage moved forward and spoke to Joey with distinct caution. "I'm thinking you might be perhaps Miss Jocelyn Graham?"

"Yes, I am," Joe confessed, staring.

The stout woman became less cautious, and more communicative.

"As am own husband's cousin to Maggie

M'Tulloch, and when she telled me of Miss Craigie being down, puir body, wi' the influenzy, and the young leddy not to gang near the hoose for fear o' carrying the infection to her braw new schule . . ."

"Oh, is Miss Craigie ill? I *am* sorry," Joey cried out.

"The temperature being one hundred and four, forbye some points up which I canna mind exactly, I'm douting she's for the pewmonia, and twa in the next hoose abune lying deed of the same," the stout woman mentioned, with a certain gloomy satisfaction that puzzled Joey. "And says I to Maggie M'Tulloch, 'I'll take the young leddy,' says I, 'and what o'wer chances *she'll* not tak' the infection awa' wi' her.'"

"Thank you; that's awfully kind," Joey said politely, though mournfully. She explained to Mrs. Tresham, who looked somewhat mystified by the flood of broad Scotch.

"You poor child, I should like to take you with me to my hotel for to-night, but I suppose I hardly could, as I am staying with a friend there. But I don't like this for you. Have you authority from Miss Craigie?" she asked suddenly, turning to Maggie M'Tulloch's "own cousin" as though she rather hoped for a negative answer.

But there was no escape. Maggie M'Tul-

loch's kinswoman dived promptly into a black knitted bag that she carried and produced a sheet of paper, scrawled in pencil:

"I am so sorry, but I may not see you, Joey. Mrs. Nicol will take care of you, and put you into your train to-morrow. Good luck.

"JEAN CRAIGIE."

There was no help for it. Joey shook hands with kind Mrs. Tresham and thanked her, and walked off beside Mrs. Nicol in the wake of a huge outside porter, who wheeled her trunk on a barrow. They came up into the width and glare of Princes Street, crossed it, turned up a narrower street running at right angles to it, went half-way down, still following the porter, and turned into another narrower still, where narrow "wynds" or thread-like passages showed between the immensely tall old houses. In this street Mrs. Nicol stopped at last, produced a latch-key, and opened the door into a hall made dimly visible by a glimmer only of gas.

"Ye'll be pleased to mount, miss," she said unsmilingly.

Joey mounted four flights of stairs, all covered with slippery linoleum, till she landed at last in a room which looked as though no one could ever have laughed in it from the time the

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house was built. Four wooden waiting-room chairs stood against the mustard-coloured walls; a square table covered with a mottled brown cloth stood exactly in the centre. A cheap, crudely coloured print of "The last sleep of Argyle" above the chimney-piece was the sole attempt at ornament, unless one counted the dim cruets which occupied, for the want of a side-board, the centre of the dingy and once white-painted mantelpiece. The room was at once cold and stuffy.

"Ye'll be taking your supper here, miss, and then ye shall gang to your bed," Mrs. Nicol informed her, and Joey, seeing nothing whatever to stay up for, agreed meekly. It was not the evening she had pictured to herself, but she must make the best of it. She wrote a pencil post card to Mums, while Mrs. Nicol laid the table and set before her a rather gristly chop, in which she mentioned that the journey had been "all right" and she herself was "all right" too. It seemed better not to mention Miss Craigie's illness, and this rather desolate reception, when she happened to be one of those five children who had promised father to "take care of Mums."

CHAPTER III

THE DUTIES OF A SCHOLARSHIP KID

“SHE’LL be there, I suppose?”

“Why should she, you mugwump? A scholarship kid won’t have an entrance exam like an ordinary new girl.”

“I wish to goodness the Redlands trustees had never thought of the old scholarship idea,” grumbled a third voice. “Mary Hertford was rather the limit, wasn’t she? at least when she was in the Lower School—setting the pace so frightfully fast, specially in maths, but at least Mary was our own sort. I don’t call it playing the game to shove village schoolgirls among us.”

“Syb, you don’t mean it?”

“I do. Miss Wakefield told mother. The Lamb had had a letter from her dear Miss Craigie, I fancy, and in her joy went bleating round to everyone. . . . Fact! This scholarship kid was the priceless gem from some village school.”

“How putrid!”

“What on earth are we to do with her?”

“Put up with her, I suppose, Noreen, my good

child. What else do you suppose we can do?"

"Wish to goodness I hadn't worked so beastly hard last term. Reward, Remove II. B, and the company of this village kid. It's sure to be in Remove II. with scholarship! Think she'll say 'sy' for say, and drop her 'h's'?"

"She's Scotch, not Cockney, you cuckoo, and probably quite harmless," someone else chimed in. "But I should have thought the Grammar School a bit more her line. However to Redlands she's coming, and at Redlands she'll presumably stay, and we shall have to make the best of it."

"And of her," groaned the girl called Syb.

There was a silence; for the little group of girls in the corridor had to make room for some indignant fellow-passengers to pass out from the compartment in the corner of which Joey was wedged, unable, without putting her fingers into her ears, and so drawing undesired attention to herself, to help overhearing the chief part of this conversation. These girls had joined the train at Lincoln, where Joey, in accordance with instructions, had changed for the local line; and the train had been so full that these girls had never bothered to find a seat at all, but stood in a tight bunch in the corridor, talking loudly to make themselves heard above the roar of the train. They were Redlands girls; Joey would have

known that by their uniform if she hadn't by their talk.

It had taken her a minute or two to tell what they meant by village schoolgirls; when she did, her face grew hot, and she stared defiantly towards them.

They were outsiders themselves, thought Joey, to talk like that about a girl who was coming to Redlands, even if she had been to a different sort of school before. But though the thinking it was certainly a relief, it could not quite do away with the sore, hurt feeling. Evidently the Redlands girls were not inclined to start friends.

It was all the harder to bear because they were such jolly-looking girls. The one called Noreen was extremely pretty, with lovely Irish-blue eyes under black eyebrows, and a wealth of dark hair; and even Syb was nice-looking, with a bright colour and a straight, determined figure. The girl who had spoken last was short and insignificant, with bobbed hair, but her eyes were very bright and her smile infectious, Joey settled; while the other two were a round-faced couple, much too nice in appearance for the sentiments they had been expressing.

Joey was to have an opportunity for studying them more closely in a minute, for apparently they had had enough of standing in the corridor, and came pouring into her compartment so

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soon as the other passengers had poured out. They didn't trouble even to put their hockey sticks in the rack, by which Joey guessed that Mote Deep, the station for Redlands, was not far away.

The one called Syb caught sight of Joey as they came in. "Hullo!" she said.

"Hullo!" Joey answered, not being sure what to answer.

"New kid, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"What's your name?" asked Noreen.

"Jo—Jocelyn Graham."

Noreen shot a quick glance at Syb. "Where do you come from?"

"Scotland." Joey did not feel inclined to be communicative.

"You're not the scholarship kid, are you, by any chance?" demanded the girl with the bobbed hair.

"Yes."

"Oh, murder! I didn't think you were, somehow."

"Did you think I was going to look so awfully unlike everybody else?" Joey demanded in her turn. She could not quite keep the hurt tone out of her voice, though she tried.

"No; why should we?" the girl with the bobbed hair answered, a shade uncomfortably, and

then they all looked at each other and there was an awkward little pause. Noreen broke it, speaking in a more friendly tone than any of them had done yet.

"I suppose you've had someone to put you up to what scholarship girls have to do at Redlands?"

"No." Joey was not expansive, suspecting some covert allusion to that village school, which appeared so upsetting to these very select Redlanders.

"Oh, didn't they?" Noreen's blue eyes met hers gravely, and, Joey fancied, sympathetically.

It was rather difficult to ask any favours of girls who despised her, but Miss Craigie was far away in Edinburgh, wrestling with the "influenza"—poor Miss Craigie!—and clearly she was on the edge of one of those pitfalls that lie in wait for new girls.

"If it wouldn't be a bother, perhaps you would tell me what I have to do?" she asked.

Noreen leaned forward confidentially. "Of course I will. There's not much to tell; just two or three little things that are always done by the scholarship winner."

The others all displayed a sudden and flattering interest in Joey. They leaned forward too, so as not to miss a word.

"Tidying the Lab is the most important

thing," Noreen went on gravely. "We've got a jolly old French Stinks Professor, Monsieur Trouville; frightfully brainy over stinks, but untidy—oh! my Sunday hat and Dublin Castle!—untidy isn't the word for it!"

Joey tried to grasp the situation valiantly.

"Do I sweep or dust or wash up his messes or what?" she asked.

The girl with the bobbed hair coughed alarmingly. Syb thumped her back, and said, "Shut it, Barbara!"

Noreen seemed a little taken aback by this question. "No, you don't, I think—and, anyhow, you *never* empty messes out of one saucer into another or you'd probably blow up the Coll," she stated candidly. "You just—put bottles into the cupboards—and don't take any notice if he tells you to get out and boil yourself. He does say these sort of things. He's a beast of a temper," Noreen added kindly.

"When do I begin?" Joey asked.

"Tidying the Lab? Well, I shouldn't waste any time," Syb chimed in. "As soon as you get to Redlands, I should say—anyone would show you where it is."

"Righto!" Joey told them, with outward cheerfulness, though inward tremors. "Anything else?"

Noreen's blue eyes had an odd gleam. "Not

much. You lace up the Senior Prefect's boots; she is Ingrid Latimer—and . . . and . . . write out the supper menus for cook."

"*What?*" shrieked Joey.

"Oh, don't you remember, Noreen, they stopped that because Mary Hertford wrote like a diseased spider," Syb contributed. "The scholarship kid only . . . only . . ."

She choked.

"You're not having me on?" demanded Joey.

"My dear Kid; go to the Lab when you get there, and see if we are."

The train stopped. "Mote Deep" flashed before their eyes. The station for Redlands was reached. Joey grasped her things and asked no further questions. She was there!

She stood forlornly by her suit-case on the platform, while the rest fell upon some other girls waiting for them there. Joey stood apart. Noreen seemed to be telling some story in an emphatic whisper, a funny story evidently, for everybody shrieked with laughter, except one freckled girl, who said lazily, "What a shame!" and looked towards Joey as though she had half a mind to come and speak to her. Joey hoped that she would, but she didn't. It was Syb who came at last, when all the luggage had been got out and piled in the rather ancient cabs which still did duty in Little Holland.

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"We're going to walk, Jocelyn; of course you can come with us if you like, but considering all the extra things a scholarship kid has to start with, p'r'aps you'd better cab it."

Joey was proud, and the inference was rather plain. They didn't want her company.

"I should have cabbéd it anyhow. I'd rather," she told Syb, with decision, and walked off in the direction of the cabs, her head held very high.

She got into the first, and sat on the edge of the rather mildewy cushions, trying to face things out. It was all rather different from what she had pictured; but Mums needn't know that. And she wouldn't have to worry about the girls and their unfriendly ways at present anyhow, for she had the Lab to put tidy, and afterwards that other unknown terror, the lacing up of the Head Girl's boots.

If only she could have travelled with Miss Craigie or someone friendly, she could have asked how and when all these things were done; but Father had always said, "Don't grouse over what might have been; get on to what is." What is, appeared to be tidying the Lab for the ill-tempered French Professor; Joey settled to get on to that at once.

The cab was jolting along a flat marsh road that lay between a rolling sea of green. The real sea was not visible, for a white mist lay on

the horizon, but the taste and the tang on her lips was salt, and there was a wonderful sense of space and freshness around her. Nothing broke the flatness of the landscape but here and there a squat church tower in the midst of a cluster of cottages.

Presently another tower drew her attention, a tall, gaunt tower, seeming like a warning, uplifted finger raising itself in the peaceful sea of green as if to say, "Watch!" Joey wondered what its story might be. She craned her head out of the cab window to look back at it, long after it was receding into distance, and was so absorbed in it that she was taken by surprise when the cab stopped before high ornamented iron gates, and the cabman shouted something indistinguishable. A pleasant-looking woman ran out, and swung the great gates back. This was Redlands. Joey began to feel a little quaky, though she tried to pretend it was all rather fun. The pretence wasn't very successful at that moment; but at least she knew what was expected of her on arrival. That was a decided comfort.

She looked before her with quite as much interest as she looked behind, while the cab crawled down the long, straight drive towards the irregular mass of dim red brick veiled in ivy. Architecturally, Redlands College left something to be desired, as it had been altered

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and added to at different times by people of widely differing views; but the whole had been mellowed together in a district where even new red brick hardly stares above a month; and presented to its world a silent, solid dignity.

Joe looked from the original Redlands, an early seventeenth century Manor House, to the wing built on by Madame Hèrbert, who kept a flourishing school for young ladies of quality in the stormy days of the Second James, and on to the additions of two centuries later, and the Swimming Bath, Gymnasium, and Laboratories marking the further requirements of the twentieth century and the march of education.

Joey was no authority on architecture, however, and did not come to know all this till she had been some days at Redlands. Just then she merely thought that the place looked jolly, though about twice as big as she had expected.

The cab drew up before the flight of steps leading to the front door; Joey jumped out. A highly superior parlour-maid appeared before she had time to ring the bell. Probably she had heard the crunching of the many cab wheels on the gravel. Joey spoke at once. "Please could you direct me to the Chemical Lab? They told me to go there at once."

The maid looked a little surprised. "Miss

Conyngham will be back soon, miss," she said hesitatingly. "Hadn't you better wait?"

"I was told to go there," Joe said firmly, and the maid pointed to a building on the right, rather behind the main block. "That's the Lab, miss; but unless the Professor is there you won't be able to go in. It's locked."

"I'll try anyhow," Joey told her, and walked off in the direction pointed out.

She went up two steps to the door of the Lab. Joey went up them cautiously, as when they played hide-and-seek at home and somebody was likely to spring out and catch you. But no furious professor sprang, and Joey tried the door, and found it was locked, but on the outside. So she turned the key and went in, with the words, "Please, I've come to tidy," ready on her lips.

But there was no one to whom to say them; the Lab was quite empty, though it certainly looked as though it had not been empty for long. Bottles stood upon a table, and two or three saucers containing various powders, and a large scented silk handkerchief of violet hue lay on the floor beside a dark closet with open door.

Joey began to tidy as well as she could. She used her handkerchief for a duster, and presently, finding it rather small, took up the violet one, which was already tolerably dirty and there-

fore might be dirtier without mattering, she thought.

She did not put the bottles away, in case the Professor should come back and want them, but she took them off the table and dusted it, and then put them back in orderly rows. The saucers she wisely did not touch, except to dust underneath them. Then she attacked the dark closet, which was surrounded by shelves, holding innumerable saucers, trays, bottles, and boxes. A good many of these things were on the floor. Joey rammed her dusters into the pockets of her coat, and set to work to find a safer resting-place for them. She was really interested by now in this duty which had been thrust upon her in right of her scholarship; so absorbed indeed that she never heard an exclamation at the door and a quick step acrosss the room. She noticed nothing till the half-open door of the closet was wrenched violently wide. And she sprang round to find herself looking into the furious light eyes of the French Professor.

CHAPTER IV

ENTER GABRIELLE

HE was a short man, this Monsieur Trouville, neat and dapper, though inclined to be fat. His high forehead peaked up to his receding hair, his short moustache was stiffly waxed and stood out very black against his pallid face. He was not ill-looking, but just at that moment Joey thought she had never seen anyone quite so unpleasant.

He caught her by the arm. "What are you doing here? How dare you come? Do you not know it is forbidden, except when I take the classes here? I will report you to Miss Conyngham. You shall be expelled."

Joey stood her ground. "You can't expel people when they've only just come," she assured him stoutly. "It . . . isn't done. Besides, I'm all right to tidy here. I'm the scholarship girl."

This last statement did not appear to mitigate Monsieur Trouville's fury in the least.

"You have distairbed all my bottles—you have made for me hours of work with your

disobedience," he snarled. "I vill have you punished—you shall be no more at Redlands!"

He began to cast about the room, like a bloodhound nosing for a trail. Joey felt rather frightened; there was no doubt about it, Monsieur Trouville was really angry. He spluttered out the objurgations in his strong French accent rather like an angry cat. Somehow, in spite of what Noreen and Syb had said, she had not expected him to be quite so much annoyed by her presence.

"I'm awfully sorry if I've mixed your bottles," she told him, trying to speak steadily. "I didn't mean to. Perhaps some time when you're not too busy you would just show me how you like things tidied, and then——"

Monsieur Trouville made three strides towards her, with so menacing an expression that Joey gave back a step in spite of herself.

"Miss Conyngham tell you to say dat?" he demanded.

"No, of course not. Do you suppose one needs *telling* to be polite?" Joey answered, growing angry in her turn. "If you don't want your old Lab tidied for you I'm sure I don't want to do it. Good-bye."

And Joey departed with all the dignity that she could muster, though she felt a good deal more like crying. The Professor's suspicious at-



"HOW DARE YOU COME?"

titude was rather hurting. "He couldn't have been a worse beast if he thought I meant to steal his bottles," she told herself.

She was half-way back towards the front door before she discovered she *had* stolen something from the Lab after all. Fumbling for the handkerchief which was rather badly wanted at that moment, she brought out a curiously unfamiliar one of violet silk, now excessively grubby. She looked at it with dismay. What wouldn't the Professor do if she went back and told him that to add to her other offences she had used his handkerchief for a duster.

"I'd better wash it first before I return it," Joey said to herself, and rammed it back into her pocket.

She wondered whether Noreen and the others had turned up yet; it would be satisfactory to tell them that she had done the Lab already. Joey thought that she would not say anything about the Professor's fury, which, after all, had been unjust. She put her head down, and raced at her best pace for the front door; it would be rather fun to talk as though the Professor had been quite pleased with her tidying.

Phut! Joey had gone full tilt into someone who was coming from the house—a very tall girl with her hair tied back. "Here, look where

you're going, you young idiot!" the big girl called out angrily.

Joey came to earth metaphorically with a bump. "I say, I'm frightfully sorry. Did I hurt you?"

"That's not likely, considering you're half my size," said the tall girl. "But you should look. What's your name?"

"Jocelyn Graham. What's yours?"

The tall girl frowned. "I am Ingrid Latimer, Senior Prefect here," she said coldly, and Joey understood that she had done the wrong thing in asking that off-hand question.

She became rather flustered. "Oh, are you? Then—when do you want your boots put on?" she asked nervously.

Ingrid frowned more alarmingly. "What on earth are you talking about?"

"I got the scholarship—don't I have to put your boots on?" faltered Joey. Now she came to put it into words it did sound an extremely silly thing to say. Somehow she wasn't surprised by the crushing tone of the Senior Prefect's answer.

"Please don't try to be funny; we've no use for that sort of thing here. Who put you up to all this?"

A light began to break upon Joey. Something hot surged in her chest. "Oughtn't I to

have tidied the Lab either?" she asked, with the courage of desperation.

"Tidied the Lab! Why, no one's allowed there without Monsieur or the Chemistry Mistress. Look here, my good child, are you trying to be funny—I shouldn't, because it won't pay you—or are you the outsidest edge of imbecile new kids that ever came to Redlands?"

Joey was silent. She was trying to adjust things in her mind. The girls had had her on, and oh how easily! She *was* the outsidest edge in imbeciles, she supposed.

"Who put you up to all this?" repeated the Senior Prefect magisterially.

Joey stuck her hands into her pockets. She had been made a fool of; well, it wasn't pleasant, but one must grin and bear it, even the hateful apologising to the justly incensed Professor, which she supposed must be her next proceeding. She wasn't going to get the others into trouble anyway, and Ingrid Latimer's tone suggested trouble ahead. "Oh, never mind!" she said.

"I wish to know," Ingrid repeated. "Their names, please?"

"Sorry, it can't be done," Joey stuck out hardily. "And if you don't want your boots put on, I'll go—please!"

The Senior Prefect looked as though she could

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hardly believe her ears; but Joey hadn't been educated up to Senior Prefects and their expressions. She bolted straight back to the Lab; it would be best to get that hateful apology over at once.

But the door was locked, this time on the inside, and though she knocked till her knuckles were sore, there was no answer.

"Hi, Jocelyn Graham, you're to go to Miss Conyngham," shouted a familiar voice, and Noreen hove in sight round the corner.

Joey saw her opportunity. "Tell that to some other idiot, if you can find one silly enough to listen to the sort of things you say," she told her. "Personally, I find it jolly interesting to see what a kid like you will try on next; but even I don't want too much funniness, thank you."

She marched off, leaving an outraged and astounded Noreen staring after her, and betook herself to the sleepy stream meandering at the bottom of the garden. It was a comfort to feel that Noreen had not succeeded in having her on a third time, but it was about all the comfort there was. Joey felt desperately home-sick and miserable just then, and as if she would give anything in the world to find herself on the heathy moor, or making bannocks for tea in the

kitchen of the little grey stone cottage, far away from this puzzling and unfriendly new world.

She stared across the sleepy water, wondering whether Father had felt more wretched than this when he was a prisoner among his enemies. Yes, of course it had been worse for him, a great deal worse; for he had been in the midst of dirt and ill-usage and barbarities unspeakable — only — he hadn't expected to find the Huns friendly gentlemen, and Joey had somehow expected a great deal from Redlands. Still, that was no reason for making a fuss; Father hadn't—Joey knew that. She screwed her eyes up tight, and rubbed the back of a grubby hand across them fiercely. And while she was doing that someone spoke to her.

"I say, are you Jocelyn Graham?"

Joey opened her eyes hastily. A girl was standing by her, a girl with long lovely auburn-brown hair and clear eyes a shade darker, and a delicate clear skin. She wasn't as tall as Joey herself, anything like, and she hadn't the superior way of talking, which Joey had noticed in the rest.

"You *are* Jocelyn, aren't you?" this girl went on, and Joey liked her way of saying it, for it was friendly. "Well, do let me take you to Miss Conyngham—yes, it's all right, she really wants

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you—and she sent for you some time ago, you know.”

Joey remembered. Panic took hold of her. “Will she be mad?”

The pretty girl smiled. “She’s seeing the other new girls. You’ll be all right if we run.”

They ran. Somehow Joey did not doubt this new friend. “What’s your name?” she asked breathlessly, as they tore up from the stream and across the gardens.

“Gabrielle—Gabrielle Arden.”

“Why did you come after me?” Joey asked.

“Oh, Noreen thought you had gone down that way.”

“It was decent of you,” Joey said, with conviction.

“Jocelyn—Noreen and the others didn’t mean anything, truly,” Gabrielle panted. “They didn’t think you would really go and do the Lab, you know.”

Joey returned no answer; for one thing she had no breath to speak; for the second, she looked forward to a settlement, a little later on, with Noreen and Co., when the interview with Miss Conyngham and the hateful apology to the Professor were well over.

Gabrielle said nothing more either, and the two arrived in silence at Miss Conyngham’s door. Miss Conyngham herself opened it, shep-

herding out three girls who looked new and rather frightened.

"Ah, Gabrielle, that's right," Miss Conyngham said. "Kathleen Ronaldshay has no elder sisters here; will you take care of her and show her round? And here is Jocelyn. I will introduce all you new girls to each other, and then I want a little talk with Jocelyn alone."

Joey shook hands with Bernadine Elton, Kathleen Ronaldshay, and Ella Marne; then the three were sent off in Gabrielle's care—they were all of them much bigger than she was—and Miss Conyngham drew Jocelyn into her pretty room.

Miss Conyngham matched her room; she was dainty and fair and fragile-looking, and, as Joey mentioned afterwards to Mums, "looked as if a light were burning inside her which made her all lit up as soon as she began to talk."

She did not look as though she could keep six hundred girls in order; but Joey found out very soon that appearances were deceitful in this case. Just now, however, Miss Conyngham was not out to keep anyone in order.

"I was so sorry that you and Miss Craigie couldn't come down together; but I have had a wire, she is better, and the temperature very much down this morning. So I hope we may get her back in a fortnight. And by that time

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I expect you will have made hosts of friends, and have a tremendous amount to tell her."

Joey assented cautiously. Privately she doubted the friends, and it certainly wouldn't be possible to tell Miss Craigie that she hated Redlands for fear it should go back to Mums *via* the minister. But an assent of some kind seemed the proper thing.

"You will be placed in Remove II. B; that is the head form of the Lower School," Miss Conyngham went on. "Gabrielle, who brought you here, is in that form, only she is A: she is Head of the Lower School, you know, and only thirteen; we are all proud of Gabrielle at Redlands."

"Is she top of this Remove place, then?" asked Joey.

"Not necessarily. The Head of the Lower School is chosen from Remove II., but it is in open Election among the other girls. They vote for the best in every way out of sixty Remove girls; you want a great many qualities to be Head of the Lower School, Jocelyn."

Joey was interested. She somehow hadn't guessed that Gabrielle was anything special, except good-natured to a new girl.

"The election of the Head Girl for the two hundred and fifty of the Upper School, and for the three hundred and fifty of the Lower, hap-

pens at the end of every year," Miss Conyngham went on, in a nice companionable way, as though she were quite sure that Joey would be interested, and feel the school matters her own. "It is a very serious affair, I can assure you. The result of the Election holds good for the whole succeeding year; at Christmas Gabrielle will stand for re-election—that is, if she doesn't pass out of Remove into the Upper School. By the end of the term all this will have come to mean a very great deal to you, I think."

Joey's assent was again a model of caution; of course, Miss Conyngham didn't realise how the girls resented that village school. Probably Gabrielle had just been nice because she did not know.

"Well, now it must be tea-time," Miss Conyngham concluded, "and you must go and have tea. Give Matron your keys afterwards, and she will show you where to put away your clothes."

Miss Conyngham consulted a list pinned on her wall. "You are in Blue Dormitory, I see; that is a very favourite one. I will ask Gabrielle to introduce you to your room-mates, Sybil Gray, Barbara Emerson, and Noreen O'Hara. I think you will all get on very comfortably together."

Joey did not even give a cautious assent to

this; she thought she knew exactly how that quartette were going to get on. She just said, "Thank you, Miss Conyngham."

Miss Conyngham rang the bell twice. A minute later there was a tap at the door, and Gabrielle answered her "Come in."

"Take Jocelyn in to tea and show her her dormitory, Gabrielle, please," Miss Conyngham said. She did not add, "Take care of her," for which Joey was grateful. It was bad enough to be disliked by the rest, but at least she needn't be despised. No one should guess that she wasn't feeling happy at Redlands.

"Which dorm are you in?" Gabrielle asked, as soon as Miss Conyngham's door was shut behind them.

"Blue," Joey said briefly.

"That's topping. It's next door to mine, and such a jolly set there."

"I know," Joey interrupted rather grimly. "Sybil and Barbara and Noreen."

"Do you know them, then?" asked Gabrielle, surprised.

"We met in the train," Joey explained. She hesitated for a second. "I shall *like* being in their dorm."

CHAPTER V

LIVELINESS IN BLUE DORM

TEA was over—a tea which seemed a babel to Joey's unaccustomed ears, although Cousin Greta would probably have laughed at the term "unaccustomed," considering the noise that the five Grahams could make among themselves.

But Cousin Greta would never have guessed what a great school could do at the first meal, with discipline relaxed and everybody trying to tell special friends how they had spent the holidays.

Joey sat under the wing of a very young mistress, who wore a great bunch of violets in her belt, and was addressed as "Miss Lambton." She saw to it that Joey had plenty of bread and jam and cake, and addressed two or three good-natured questions to her; but it wasn't in the nature of things that the new girl shouldn't feel rather out of it, when all near neighbours wanted to tell Miss Lambton where they had been and what they had done, and she had to interrupt her adorers in order to speak to Joey. Gabrielle

had been swamped directly they came into the huge refectory by two vehement people, with a tiny silver shield fastened to their djibbabs, who assured her vociferously that she had promised to sit between them for the first tea last term.

However, she remembered the new girl directly tea was over, and made her way to Joey's side, when the girls rose from table.

"Will you come to your dorm now?"

"I've got to go and say something to the Professor in Lab," Joey said doubtfully, not being at all sure that when she reached Blue Dorm she wouldn't be expected to stay there interviewing Matron, or something of that kind.

"Oh, come on, Gabrielle, if the new kid doesn't *want* to be shown her dormitory, don't fag over her," urged two or three impatient voices; but Gabrielle stood her ground.

"I quite forgot. Ingrid Latimer—she's Senior Prefect—of course, you don't know her yet—sent me a message for you. She said the Lab was all right, and she had seen Monsieur Trouville. I don't know what it means, but perhaps you do."

"Yes, I know," Joey answered shortly. It had been kind of the Senior Prefect to face the furious Professor for her, and Gabrielle seemed kind and friendly, too; but you couldn't tell about these girls. They despised her because of

Calgarloch school, and she never knew when they would have set her on about something else. She didn't feel inclined to be effusive.

Gabrielle shook off her admirers and conducted Joey up many stairs and along many passages in silence. Only when she had opened the door of a large, light, airy room, with blue-washed walls and blue quilts to the four beds and blue curtains to the windows, did she find her voice again.

"This is Blue Dorm, Jocelyn. I'm sure you'll like it. Isn't it a topping view? Look how well you can see the Fossdyke Wash—and that's the Walpole Fen, all down on the right—it's reclaimed, you know—and do you see that tower?"

"Yes; I saw it coming along. What is it?" asked Joey, coming a little more out of her shell.

Gabrielle sunk her voice to an impressive whisper. "It's haunted—it is really, Jocelyn. Of course Miss Conyngham and the sensible people would say nonsense; but we've heard awfully queer sounds sometimes, and once I saw some blue light with my own eyes, when Doron Westerby—another four had this dorm last term—had toothache in the night, and called me. You know a man was murdered there; ages back, it was. His enemy tied him up in an underground room of the tower, and then blew

out a bit of the sea-wall at one of the great autumn tides."

Joey gasped. "How beastly. Are his mouldering bones there now?"

"I think they're cleared up," Gabrielle said regretfully. "You look for the light, Jocelyn—you'll have a topping chance. I wonder which bed you'll have—three have windows, you see; it's only in that fourth one by the door you can't see anything, and I don't think it's fixed yet who sleeps there."

As if in answer to her words, there was a stampede outside, and the three other owners of Blue Dorm rushed headlong in. Each carried something in her hand—a book, a comb, a handkerchief. With one consent they rushed upon the three window beds, and hurling the article upon it, shouted breathlessly, "Bags I this!"

Gabrielle got rather red. She walked up to Syb and spoke in a low voice. Joey caught the words "a new girl" and "playing up." But whatever her appeal might be, it hadn't much effect. Joey marched over to the bed by the door.

"This is mine, then," she said.

Matron came in a minute later, in her usual hurry, demanding keys and everyone's attention instantly. Gabrielle was dispatched to the big basement room downstairs to help in the un-

packing and putting away of her things; and Joey found she was expected to do the same, after Matron had shown her exactly where and how her things should go, and explained that there was a dormitory inspection, inside and out, of drawers and cupboards every Saturday of term.

Joey ran upstairs with armfuls of clothes, and downstairs to get more for a long time after that; but at last everything was put away, and Matron, weary and a trifle dishevelled, made a tour of inspection before going to see the babies into bed.

The four in Blue Dorm were left to arrange their photographs and private belongings before changing into their white frocks for supper. Joey got to work on her shelf and combined chest of drawers and dressing-table silently and unsociably. The others had a great deal to say to each other, and took no notice of her for some little time. Then Sybil, who had finished, came strolling up to the corner by the door, and cast a glance over Joey's photographs.

"I say, what an awfully good-looking boy," she said, picking up the photo of Gavin, taken for Mums out of the tip Uncle Staff sent him when he won the scholarship. "Who's he—your brother?"

The devil entered into Joey. "No; that's the

flesher's boy in Calgarloch, a great pal of mine," she stated easily, arranging Mums side by side with Father in uniform.

Syb stared. Joey went on. "The kid in socks is the gravedigger's youngest—he's called Bingo; and these two, Ronnie and Kirsty, belong to the odd-and-end shop at Crumach."

With which appalling size in thumpers, Joey turned her back upon the girls, and went on arranging her photographs. Syb left her in a hurry; the others whispered together. Joey finished her corner, and got out her evening frock.

"Having us on?" asked Noreen, with a doubtful note of appreciation.

Joey slipped her frock over her head. "Find out," she suggested.

That made a pause, and everybody put on their evening dresses in silence. Barbara broke it while hair was being brushed.

"I suppose Gabrielle told you that this dorm tubs at night," she observed unwillingly. "You had better not be late coming up, because the water gets cold so quickly."

"But of course you'd bath last because of being new," Syb joined in, rather truculently.

Joey made no answer; she was considering. "Where is the bathroom?" she asked.

"Right opposite. Blue Dorm uses No. 8," Barbara vouchsafed.

"Thank you," Joey answered, with extraordinary meekness, a meekness that was almost overdone. These horrid swanky girls had forced her to accept the worst corner of the room, but it was certainly nearest the door, and Joey was quite clear in her own mind which of the Blue Dorm occupants was going to have first tub to-night.

They went down to supper after that; the three together, and Joey behind. There was a very nice supper laid in the huge refectory; but Joey was home-sick for the little sitting-room at Calgarloch and the brandered herrings and the brown bread, and Robina, the lass, bringing in the pudding, and joining freely in the conversation if she felt inclined.

Joey sat between two rather big girls, and they only spoke once to her to ask her name and age, and then talked hockey across her for the rest of the meal. Not that Joey cared; she assured herself that she didn't want to be friends with these girls.

There was dancing after supper in the Queen's Hall, but Joey looked on. Dancing wasn't taught at Calgarloch, and she refused decidedly when Gabrielle came and asked for a valse. And then at nine there were prayers, and the

whole of the Upper School, with Remove II. A and B of the Lower, filed past Miss Conyngham and said good-night. The Juniors had been swept off a good deal earlier.

Joey was really glad when bedtime came. She was longing to get a bit of her own back. Noreen and Co. had taken her in, and made an utter fool of her over the tidying of the Lab and the putting on of the Head Girl's boots; but Joey wasn't going to sit down meekly under the treatment. She managed to plant herself just in front of Sybil, Barbara, and Noreen in the long procession; and before she went downstairs she had put out her towel, sponges, etc., where she could snatch them easily. The procession moved on; and she moved with it.

She could hear Miss Conyngham's clear, mellow voice, "Good-night, Jacynth. Good-night, Mary. Good-night, Doron—oh, what about that tooth? Has it given you more trouble?"

Block number one. Joey heard Syb's grumble behind. "Bother Doron's toothache—the water will be cold."

Doron's toothache was much better, thank you; yes, the stuff had done it a lot of good; she wouldn't want any more, she thought. "Thank you, Miss Conyngham."

Doron Westerby moved on; so did the procession.

"Good-night, Sylvia. Good-night, Trixie. Good-night, Cecily. Good-night, Kathleen—any more news from home, dear?"

Block number two. Joey wondered if Syb's exaggerated groan would be heard by Miss Conyngham; they were so near her now.

Yes, Kathleen had heard from home, and Frankie was better. His temperature had gone down three degrees, thank you, Miss Conyngham.

Kathleen was disposed of. "Good-night, Thelma. Good-night, Winifred. Good-night—oh, it's you, Jocelyn? Settled your things comfortably into the Blue Dormitory?"

"Yes, thank you, Miss Conyngham."

"That's right. Sleep well. Good-night, Jocelyn."

The procession moved on. Joey was out of the Queen's Hall and on the stairs. Up them three steps at a time—the long legs at which Calgarloch stared amazed were certainly of use now. Behind her she heard Syb and Barbara disputing whose turn it was to have first bath. As the turn had to be remembered across the width of the holidays that was a difficult matter to decide. Joey chuckled inwardly; they really needn't worry themselves to remember. She

plunged at the door of Blue Dorm and grabbed her things, including pyjamas and dressing-gown. Too late; the other three saw what she meant to do.

"Here, you are last for the bathroom," Syb shouted.

Joey dived across the passage and flung herself and her belongings into Bathroom 8. "I don't think!" she said succinctly, as she slammed the bolt home.

Joey enjoyed her bath. She took as much hot water as she wanted, and didn't come out, whatever the bangings and objurgations outside the door, till she had been in the bath as long as she wished. Then at last she emerged, to face a furious trio waiting for her in Blue Dorm.

Joey plumped down her armful of belongings on her bed. "I should hurry," she advised politely. "The tap was beginning to run cooler before I left."

Syb bolted to the bathroom; the other two turned their backs studiously upon the aggressor, and talked ostentatiously to one another. Joey curled up on her bed, did her hair in three bangs, and then wrote up her diary for the first day at Redlands.

"Redlands is a hole, and the girls are pigs. I hate them all, except p'r'aps Gabrielle. They

think it a fair disgrace to have been at a council school, and say beastly things. I wish I was seventeen this minute, and coming away: I'll never get a bit of paper big enough to cross off all the hateful horrid days I've got to stay here. I have settled never to say a single word to any of these hateful horrid swanky girls, except, p'r'aps Gabrielle, as long as I live."

The letter to Mums, which was also written while the other three bathed in tepid water with much bitterness of spirit, expressed a rather different view.

"It's frightfully pretty here," Joey wrote, "and the Wash lies on the edge of what you see—all glittering—and the river is mixed up with it, and the Deeps are like another sea, only green grass. The College is awfully nice, and some of it is very ancient and historical. I'll tell you the history bits when I've mugged them up. I'm in Blue Dorm, and that's the nicest Dorm. I have the bed nearest the door, and that's frightfully handy for getting first bath. My room-companions are Sybil, Barbara, and Noreen O'Hara. They were very interested in my photographs. I'm going to have a topping time here, I can see, and I should think I'm in the liveliest dorm that ever was.—Your loving
"JOEY."

"P.S.—You might write soon; I'm frightfully happy here, still you might write."

A bell rang just as Joey had finished her letter, and a stentorian voice in the passage cried, "Silence for prayers."

Noreen O'Hara rushed from the bathroom, after a tub lasting a short two minutes, and hurled herself upon her knees among her sponges and bath-towel. A minute later a Prefect looked in, and withdrew noiselessly.

There was absolute quiet for some seven or eight minutes, and then a little murmur arose again.

Joey had dropped her writing-things and said her prayers like the rest. She wondered if she ought to feel ashamed of her behaviour with the bath; the sad thing was that she didn't, particularly. And if she said she was sorry now, the furious three would think she was afraid of what they might do to her. Joey decided to stick it out, but have a shorter and a cooler bath to-morrow.

Another bell rang. Noreen and Syb were already in bed; Barbara jumped up at the bell, and Joey more slowly followed her example. The Prefect looked in again.

"All in bed—that's right." She turned to put out the light. "Good-night."

"Good-night, Ingrid," said the injured three in a burst. "Good-night," said Joey pointedly by herself when the others had finished.

Ingrid Latimer looked in her direction.
“Why, it’s the new kid.”

She came across to Joey’s bed. “Got my message, young ’un?”

“Yes, thanks awfully.”

“That’s all right. He won’t think any more of it. You come to me, if anybody tries on that sort of game again. You’ll always find some fat-headed idiots in Coll who think it funny. Good-night.”

“Good-night, and thanks no end.”

Ingrid turned the light out. Blue Dorm was left in outward peace. It was outward only!

CHAPTER VI

A NIGHT ON THE LEADS

INGRID'S steps—alert, responsible—died away into distance. Silence settled down. Then Sybil drew a long breath, and spoke in accents which were hushed, but audible.

"Of all the utterly mean young skunks!"

"Disgusting!" Noreen agreed.

"But I suppose she hasn't learnt anything better," said Barbara.

Joey wriggled in bed, but held her tongue. Let them go on; they wouldn't hurt her.

"Such a pig about the bath-water—I hardly washed at all," Syb went on.

"Frightfully lowering to Redlands to turn that sort in," Barbara took up the parable.

Joey couldn't keep out of the fray any longer. "Did the Redlands girls want to have a nice kind fat old nurse apiece to look after them and keep them from being contaminated by less select people?" she jeered. "Poor little dears!"

"We're not talking to you, Jocelyn Graham. We don't talk to girls who behave as you do," Sybil told her icily.

"Righto. Don't then," Joey said, and turned over in bed.

But the outraged three had not finished by any manner of means.

"Sucking up and sneaking to Ingrid Latimer, too; I do call that the limit," Noreen went on. "Notice how she jawed *at* us—and I adored Ingrid all last term."

Joey was too proud to speak again after her recent snub, or she might have informed them that she had *not* sneaked to Ingrid Latimer. As it was—let them think it if they liked—she didn't care.

"Shame to put her into Blue Dorm," that was Barbara.

"P'r'aps she could be cleared out."

"Miss Conyngham is frightfully stuffy about changing dorms after she and Matron have worked it all out."

Joey got out of bed, shouldered into a dressing-gown, thrust on slippers, and seized her blue quilt.

"As it's rather difficult to go to sleep, while you're making all this row, I'll sleep somewhere else to-night, if you don't mind," she explained, with elaborate politeness, and was out of the door, trailing her quilt after her, before any of the three had recovered from the blank surprise caused by her remark.

"When she came out of Bathroom 8, Joey had noticed a ladder at the far end of the passage; she guessed that it must lead on to the roof. And what better place could one find to sleep on than a roof, on such a fine September night as this? Even if it rained she thought the leads would be better than a Blue Dorm full of hateful girls who talked at her.

She scrambled up the latter, stumbling over the blue quilt; pushed open a trap-door, and arrived, sure enough, upon the leads, all silver in the moonlight.

She had been boiling over with fury when she escaped from the Blue Dorm, but this wonderful silver world had a calming effect. It was far clearer now than it had been when she came. Then a haze had hovered over the horizon; now the broad line of the Fossdyke Wash glittered a silver glory on the edge of the white world.

The great stretch of the Walpole Fen intersected by its wide ditches unrolled itself before her, and in the flatness that curious round tower stood out conspicuously. Joey looked at it with interest; it *was* curious to see a tower standing all by itself like that. She wondered whether she would be allowed to go and explore it sometime, by herself of course, without the company of any of those hateful Redlands girls. And then she thought how interested Mums would be in hear-

ing of it. And then she thought how much more interested Mums would be if she, Joey, had seen the redoubtable blue light which Gabrielle had mentioned. And then she wondered if she would see it to-night, where she would have an even better view than if she had been allowed a window bed. That was the last clear thought in her mind before she found a sheltered corner, rolled herself tightly in her quilt, and fell asleep with her face buried in the hollow of her arm to get away from the moonlight. She dreamt of the tower, of course, but all her dreams were confused, not clear.

She awoke at last to a sense of cold, which had been with her for some time before it roused her.

"You little pig Kirsty; you've taken all the clothes," she murmured sleepily; and then, as consciousness came back, she knew that she wasn't in the familiar little bed at Pilot Cottage, where there was just room for Kirsty and herself and no more, but somewhere in a dark outdoor world with no moon left and a fine rain falling.

Joey stood up, holding her damp quilt about her. Luckily, her dressing-gown was thick, but even with that she shivered—of course she must go inside to Blue Dorm, which seemed decidedly attractive at that moment; only how in the world

was she to find the trap-door in the dark? Joey turned round, trying to make out the geography of the roof, and, as she turned, something blue shone for a moment through the drizzly darkness. She watched the light, forgetting damp and discomfort and the rather forlorn feeling which had seized her. The blue light flashed out three times and then disappeared. Almost at once the stable clock struck two.

The blue light had done more than give Joey a thrilling story for Mums: it had shown her how she stood. When she came up through the trap-door, the tower had been on her right. She made straight for the trap-door in the darkness, and landed full upon it; she felt the ring through her bedroom slippers.

She knelt down and lifted it cautiously, crept through and went down the ladder backwards much impeded by the quilt, and with all her teeth chattering as if they would never stop. Noiselessly she tiptoed into Blue Dorm, found her bed, and got into it, pulling her bedclothes tightly round her.

Unfortunately, this process did not keep her teeth from chattering, cold chills chased each other up and down her spine, and the bed shook with her shivering.

Someone spoke from one of the window beds:
"I say, Jocelyn!"

"Thought you weren't talking to me!" Joey inquired, as high-handedly as is possible with teeth chattering like castanets. It was Noreen's voice that had spoken; she recognized the faint touch of the brogue.

"Are you crying?"

"Likely!" Joey got all the scorn possible into that one word.

Noreen sat up in bed.

"Then what *are* you doing?"

"Shivering."

"Oh!" said Noreen, and ducked down in her bed, because there was a step outside, and the door opened. Ingrid came in with a candle.

"I thought I heard talking; is any one ill?"

"Joey withdrew herself and her shivers well under the bedclothes, and buried her face in the pillow.

"Nothing's the matter, Ingrid," Noreen said, rather flustered. "I just thought one of them was awake—and asked."

Ingrid was in a hurry and rather cold besides. She did not make a tour of the beds in Blue Dorm.

"My dear Kid, don't wake people up to ask if they're awake," she said. "You spoke quite loud: I heard you in the passage, when I was fetching stuff for Dorothy's earache. Go to sleep, and anyhow keep quiet, please."

She shut the door. Noreen wisely waited for a good five minutes before saying anything else. Then she got out of bed and came across to Joey, carrying her quilt.

"Stick this on top of yours. Goodness, you *are* cold. Like my rug too? It's just folded at the end of my bed; I can get it in a sec."

"Thanks awfully," jerked poor Joey, wondering if she ever would be warm again. Though she didn't want to take anything from these horrid unfriendly Redlands girls, she couldn't resist the quilt and the rug, and Noreen's voice was kind just then.

"Where *have* you been?" Noreen whispered, as she tucked the plaid down over the two quilts.

"Roof," said Joey.

"You haven't? Up the ladder and on to the leads. You slept there? I say, there *would* have been a row if Ingrid found out!"

"Well, I suppose so," Joey acknowledged. Her teeth were chattering rather less; it was more possible to speak.

"She'd be sure to say we drove you to it," Noreen said. "She knew about our ragging you. . . ."

"I didn't tell her—at least when I asked about her boots I spoke about the Lab, and she wanted to know who told me to tidy it," Joey explained.

"Did you tell?"

"No."

Noreen sat down on her bed.

"You're rather a young sport, Jocelyn. I say, it was rather a shame about the Lab; was the Professor a frightful beast about it?"

"He was rather; I think he needn't have been so bad considering the French and we are allies for evermore," Joey said.

"He's only French-Swiss; daresay he can't be as nice as pure French," Noreen suggested soothingly. "Anyhow, Ingrid has settled him up—she can tackle any professor born: you should see her with our literature prof: disagrees with him and that sort of thing. All the same, it was a mean shame to have you on about the Lab, Jocelyn; I was really rather sorry about it afterwards—only, you know, you were so uppish about the bath."

The shivers had practically subsided; Joey felt happier.

"I know; I shouldn't do that again."

"I don't blame you for getting something off us when you had the chance," Noreen observed, with an effort after fair play. "Good-night, Jocelyn: I hope you'll be all right now."

"Good-night, Noreen; thanks ever so."

Joey went to sleep at last, with an idea in her

mind that some at least of the girls at Redlands were better than they seemed.

No one could think how a girl who had arrived perfectly well at four o'clock yesterday, could manage to develop such a frightful crying cold as Joey brought to breakfast next morning. Miss Lambton commented upon it; her neighbors at breakfast commented upon it with less concern and more candour; Matron commented upon it quite severely, while sticking a thermometer that tasted of carbolic into Joey's unwilling mouth, in the hall.

Noreen was hovering near.

"Please I expect that bed by the door has a draught or something," she suggested. "Shall I change with her? I don't mind really."

"Rubbish about a draught," Matron answered briskly. "There is just as much draught by a window. But you can change beds if you both like—only it's not to be a precedent."

Matron's urbanity was possibly due to the fact that Joey had been proved to have no temperature, and therefore could not be convicted of the heinous crime of sickening for measles, "flu," or chicken-pox.

"Keep a sports-coat on all day in the house, and you are not to stand about when the ground is wet, or stay out after four," she said, with

authority. "You can run away now, but be careful. You must have done something really silly to get a cold like that."

"Come and change the beds," whispered Noreen, and the two ran up to Blue Dorm together.

"Look here, it's jolly decent of you, but it doesn't matter about changing, really," Joey blurted out.

Noreen grinned engagingly.

"You silly cuckoo, don't you see I want to bag your tip of 'First Bath.' "

But Joey knew that wasn't the real reason; she began to like Noreen.

CHAPTER VII

THE VIOLET HANDKERCHIEF

A SELECT committee consisting of Ingrid Latimer, Freda Martin, Joan Chichester, and Miss Lambton, the assistant games-mistress, tried the new girls for hockey that afternoon, playing them with a selection from the second hockey-team.

Joey enjoyed herself, though she had not played since she was quite small and a day-girl at a school in Hertfordshire. Her running and her passing were both commended, the one by Ingrid and the other by Miss Lambton; and she was dreadfully disappointed when, at four o'clock, Miss Lambton looked at her watch, and said something in an undertone to Ingrid. Then she called out:

"Jocelyn Graham is to go indoors now. Change your hockey things, Jocelyn," she added, "and you can ask for a book from the Lower School Library."

Of course that bothering cold! Joey thanked Miss Lambton, and went indoors in very low spirits. Now that she had been reminded of her

cold, she felt much worse at once. Her head and eyes were heavy; she didn't think she would ask for a book after all. She wandered up to Blue Dorm, and began to change very slowly, finally taking out a clean handkerchief from the drawer, and putting her handkerchief—her third that day—into her linen-bag.

Something deep-toned showed at the bottom of her bag, under the white of her own handkerchiefs; of course she still had the violet silk handkerchief which she had used to dust the Lab. Joey decided that it would be a very good thing to wash it, here and now, while she had the time. She plunged her arm into the linen-bag and drew it out. What a good thing she had needed another handkerchief, or it would probably have gone to the wash with her other things, and the Professor would have had to wait till the laundry returned it. Joey dashed into the bathroom with the violet handkerchief, turned on some moderately hot water, and began to scrub with vigour. She got the dirt off fairly well, to judge by the extraordinarily black conditon of the bath; if she could only dry it, it might be possible to return it to the Lab this very evening. Joey didn't like to think of the Professor wanting his handkerchief and thinking of her as a thief as well as a most interfering schoolgirl.

But how was she to dry that handkerchief?

Hung out over a chair in the Blue Dorm it would certainly take all night. The late September sun was near its setting; she couldn't dry it on the window ledge, that was quite certain. If only Gabrielle had been about, or even Noreen, she might perhaps have asked whether it was allowable to go down to the kitchens to find a fire. Already in the twenty-four hours she had spent at Redlands she had learnt there were several things not allowed which would have been the ordinary sort of thing to do at Calgarloch—and Father had always been particular about obedience. But both were playing hockey, and Joey was still cautious about the others. Probably she would be had on again, if she asked strangers.

She went down two flights of stairs, holding the wet handkerchief crumpled in her hand, and wondering what she had better do. Then she saw a door open, and heard a babel of small voices coming from behind it, and—surprising sight, a glow of firelight. She pushed the door open a very little farther, and peeped in.

About twelve or fourteen very small girls, their ages ranging from six or seven to nine, were sitting in a huge half-circle round a bright fire. They were all talking hard, regardless of a pleasant-looking maid who was laying tea—a very nice tea, with plenty of bread and jam, and a plate of round, shiny-topped buns.

They all stopped chattering though, when they caught sight of Joey, and stared at her solemnly in absolute silence. Still, she couldn't be uncomfortable with people of that age, even if they hadn't reminded her so much of Kirsty and Bingo.

"Do you mind if I come in and dry something by your fire?" she asked.

The children received the request most graciously, scrambling aside to make room for her in the middle of the circle, and helping her to hang the handkerchief over the high nursery fender.

"Is it your hankserchiff?" asked a small, solemn voice, while she was spreading it out; and she turned round to meet the grave, dark eyes of the very tiniest child she had ever seen at school. She was about half Bingo's size, but she spoke quite distinctly, except for the mispronunciation of the word handkerchief. Her black hair was cut square over her forehead and bobbed; her small, round face had very little colour, and except for the amount of expression in it and the fact that she was talking, Joey could almost have taken her for a French doll.

"No, it's not mine; it's one I borrowed, so I washed it," she explained, and then she pulled the tiny child upon her lap, as she sat on the floor.

"What's your name, I wonder?"

"Bertillia," breathed the mite, pronouncing all the syllables quite distinctly, and looking solemnly up at Joey as she spoke.

"But we call her Tiddles," said a jolly-looking, round-faced person on Joey's right. "At least the big ones did first, and we caught it off them. And she's like a Tiddles, isn't she—just a sort of little kitten thing you can pick up."

"You squeeze me when you pick me up, Ros-ie," Tiddles stated.

"How old is she?" Joey asked, cuddling Tiddles close, as she cuddled Bingo, when he allowed it—which wasn't often.

"Oh, she's six—but isn't she small—people think she's only two or three," Rosie answered. "She's Belgian, you know, and Miss Conyng-ham has taken her 'cause she's got nobody. Her mother got killed, and the one who brought her to England died of tiredness, poor thing—she had to walk and walk and carry Tiddles. She found her, you know; and look what those pigly Germans had done to her. Show your arm, Tiddles, darling."

Tiddles, who had listened seriously and unwinkingly to her mournful story, related so very cheerfully by Rosie, gave a funny little nod, and pulled up the loose sleeve of her tiny blouse. On the small arm was a long, deep scar.

"Did the Huns——?" Joey gasped.

"Yes, though she was just a tiny baby. We're never going to speak to a German again as long as we live," Rosie stated firmly. "We've settled that; we shall just look the other way if we meet one, as though he was a bad smell. Poor Tiddles!"

Tiddles had been staring at Joey very solemnly, all the time that Joey was looking at her arm. Now she suddenly laid down her black head upon Joey's shoulder. "I like you," she said.

Joey kissed the top of the little black head. "You're a darling! My father was killed by the Germans—at least by their being such beasts to him and all the other wounded men. They put him in a cattle-truck, and it was all filth, and they had no water, and when the women on the way heard they were English they wouldn't give them any, though they had heaps."

Joey stared through the bars of the grate, her eyes growing dim. "So father died, after a bit."

"Would you ever do anything for a German—except despise him?" another small girl asked truculently, and Joey answered:

"No, I don't suppose I should."

She scrambled up in a hurry. "Oh, my hanky's singeing!"

She was only just in time to save it, for the fire was really very hot. She snatched it from

the fender and looked it over anxiously to see if there were any scorched places. No, there were none; but something rather strange caught her eyes in one corner; something that came between the neat red lettering of the Professor's name—some tiny marks that stood out oddly in bright yellow from the dark violet background.

Joey stared at them for a moment in silence, holding the handkerchief stretched to its widest in her two hands. They were photographed upon her mind in that moment before they faded and disappeared, leaving the red lettering of the Professor's name alone, and the handkerchief bone-dry. Curious marks they were too—marks that looked like little dots and dashes. Joey wondered for a second, and then she heard Noreen calling in the passage:

“Jocelyn! Jocelyn!”

Joey made a dash for the door, pursued by a chorus of “Come again, come again soon!” In her hurry, she thought no more about the oddness of the little marks which appeared with the heat and disappeared again as quickly. Noreen sounded good-tempered; perhaps she would return the handkerchief to the Professor, as Joey herself was forbidden to go out.

She preferred her request, breathlessly. Noreen very muddy and dishevelled, answered a shade doubtfully.

"He's always such a foaming-at-the-mouth sort of beast if you intrude on his blessed privacy. Still, I don't mind trying if you like. He *ought* to be pleased to get back his old hanky. What am I to say if I see him—humblest apologies and all that? Righto! Stay with the kids till tea: we shan't get a fire till supper-time. If I don't return, look for me in a poisoned grave under the Lab."

Noreen departed. Joey went back to the babies for the ten minutes that remained before tea-time, and found that they liked stories quite as much as Kirsty and Bingo did. Then Matron came in to give them their tea, and Joey went down to hers.

She did not see Noreen till the meal was over; but caught her up in the hall—on the way to the classrooms for prep.

"So sorry, Jocelyn, after you've washed it and all, but I let that hanky drop on the way, and muddied it a little—not much. So I thought I'd better not face the Professor, but just chucked it in at an open window. You bet he'll see it—he probably won't know it ever left the floor where you found it," she said. "So that's all right, isn't it?"

"Thanks awfully," Joe said, and tried to think it was as right as Noreen said.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PEACE-PIPE

MATRON was lying in wait at the door of Remove II. B Classroom, and pounced on Joey as she came out at the end of prep explaining that she was to go to bed at once in order that her throat and chest might be rubbed with camphorated oil.

Joey submitted, but unwillingly; bed two hours before anybody else, when she didn't feel ill, only heavy, was a very depressing idea. However, it was clearly no case for argument.

Matron hustled her through her bath and into bed, and was rubbing her with a vigour that left no breath for conversation on her part by the time the other three came in to change their frocks for supper.

Joey wished very heartily that Matron had finished, for she had thought of some new and effective things to say to Syb and Barbara, in answer to their taunts of last night. Noreen was, of course, to be left out; Noreen had really been decent about the bed and everything, even if she had been the ringleader in that ragging business.

Joey meant to forgive and forget where Noreen was concerned; but to let Syb and Barbara have it hot and strong. Only she would contrive to let them know that she wouldn't take all the hot water again.

But of course nothing could be said or done while Matron was in the room. She had finished the rubbing now, but was pouring out a portentous dose of ammoniated quinine. On the other side of the room Barbara, Syb, and Noreen were dressing with extraordinary politeness. "Please, Barbara, could you hook me up?" and so on. They were nearly ready; if Matron stayed much longer the supper bell would ring, and the opportunity would be lost.

Joey gulped the ammoniated quinine with a haste that brought tears to her eyes; but still Matron did not go. She was inspecting Joey's garments with a searching eye to see that she was wearing enough of them. Noreen, Barbara, and Syb had reached the hair-ribbon stage before Matron had finished pointing out the need of another vest; and she was still mentioning kindly but firmly that it was generally a girl's own fault if she caught a cold, when the bell rang, and it was too late. Joey could almost have cried.

A maid brought her a strictly invalid supper—a cup of bread and milk and a spongecake. Rather unexciting. Joey made it last as long as

possible, but that wasn't very long. Then there was nothing left to do but wait till the rest came to bed.

The advantage of having a window bed was not specially apparent just now, because there was no moon and the fen-world was quite dark. Not even the shadowy outline of the high round tower was to be seen. Joey lay mournfully in bed, and wished for a book. If the girls danced again after supper it would be quite nine o'clock before they came upstairs, and it hadn't struck eight yet. More than a whole long hour to wait, doing nothing. And then, just as she was thinking that, the door of Blue Dorm opened, and Gabrielle put her head in. Joey could see her auburn hair against the light in the passage; the room itself was dark, the maid having turned off the electric light when she took the supper tray.

"Are you sleepy, Jocelyn? Or would you like me to come in and talk?" she asked.

"Oh, do come in—I'm fearfully tired of bed," Joey burst out—"that is, if you don't want to be dancing?"

Gabrielle shut the door, and felt her way over to the one occupied bed.

"I'd rather talk——"

Somebody rushed at the door, turned the handle violently, and dashed in.

"Hullo, Jocelyn, ready for some company?" demanded a cheerful and familiar voice.

Gabrielle switched on the light, and she and Noreen O'Hara looked at one another.

"Oh—you've come to sit with Jocelyn, have you?" Noreen said. "Then I'd better clear out."

"Look here, why shouldn't we both stay?" suggested Gabrielle.

"Don't know why we shouldn't," Noreen agreed. "Mind, Jocelyn?"

"Rather not."

"Only, there's one thing I want to say to you which Gabrielle can't hear—it isn't my secret," Noreen explained hurriedly.

"Shall I get out?" Gabrielle asked.

"No—stick your fingers in your ears a sec, if you don't mind."

Gabrielle obliged.

Noreen plumped down on Joey's bed. "It's this—Syb and Barbara asked me to tell you they're sorry they were such beasts to you last night—and they think you a sport not to have let on to Ingrid."

"Did they say that?" gasped Joey.

"Yes, honest injun!"

"Then I shan't be able to say the utterly hateful things I'd thought of for to-night," Joey murmured regretfully. "But I *was* a pig about the bath-water, wasn't I?"

"You were," Noreen agreed, with fervour.

"Then that's all right and square. Please tell them I'm sorry I took it all."

"Have you finished?" asked Gabrielle tragically. "It's giving me a pain in both my arms to keep them up so long."

Noreen pulled her arms down. "It's all right. We've only been settling to be friends in this dorm. After all, it *is* a decent dorm; it was a pity to fight in it."

"It's got the best places for photos of any," Gabrielle said, walking round, and looking at Joey's collection in a very friendly way. "May I take them down and look? I say, what a darling little thing in socks. Is he your brother?"

"Yes—he's Bingo—his proper name is Bevil, but of course we couldn't call him a thing like that, poor kid," Joey explained, quite cheerfully. "He is pretty, isn't he? An artist came along and painted him last year—and he was in the Academy. He did him hugging a German helmet Father brought back—and just in his everyday things, so Bingo was pleased. He was looking up as if someone out of the picture was telling him something he wasn't going to lose a word of. The artist put some Latin under the picture—it meant 'Our fathers have told us.'"

Noreen had been staring open-mouthed all through the narrative.



"HAVE YOU FINISHED?" ASKED GABRIELLE

"But—but—you *said* that the kid was the gravedigger's youngest," she broke out.

"So I did," Joey agreed calmly.

"And he isn't?"

"Did you suppose all the having on was going to be upon one side?" Joey inquired succinctly.

"Besides I thought you'd all like it better that way."

"Then isn't the big one the butcher's boy?"

"No, he's my brother Gavin."

Noreen became rather red. "I say, did you happen to hear what we said—in the train?" she stammered.

"About the village school, and letting down Redlands by my coming?" Joey answered.

"Yes, I did. I couldn't help it, you did talk so fearfully loud," she added.

"We didn't mean you to hear," Noreen said miserably.

Joey grinned. "It doesn't matter if I did. *I* don't care. It was a very jolly village school."

"I'm sure it must have been," Noreen said heartily.

"Look here," interrupted Gabrielle. "What on earth does it matter what sort of school Jocelyn went to? It was pretty poor in Redlanders even to talk as if it mattered."

"It was," owned Noreen, with a meekness that

surprised Joey, considering that she was quite half a head taller than Gabrielle.

"But Noreen started being awfully decent to me last night, when she still thought all my photos were—what I said they were," Joey chimed in, in a hurry. "So *I* don't mind. We went to the village school because Father died in the war, you know, and Mums is frightfully poor; and if the other Redlanders don't like it—well, they needn't! But I'm glad to be friends with Blue Dorm—at least not enemies, you know—that sort of friends."

"I want you to be real friends, Jocelyn—the proper kind, if you'll be it with me as well as Gabrielle," Noreen explained in a hurry. "I wanted to last night."

"All right," said Joey. "I think I'd like to be friends too."

"And we must find a name for you," suggested Gabrielle. "Jocelyn is awfully nice, but the others will think about you as the scholarship kid they ragged, if you stick to it; you want some handy little name—that will make you seem like another girl; and we'll all start fresh."

"They call me 'Joey' at home," Joey answered, after a moment's consideration. She knew there was a great deal in what Gabrielle said about the name—Jocelyn Graham had not made a very popular start.

“Joey—top-hole!” Noreen cried. *“You’re much more like a boy than a girl; that suits you down to the ground.”*

And as ‘Joey’ she was presented to the rather embarrassed Syb and Barbara when they came up to bed, armed with a sticky bag of toffee—in large lumps of which luxury the occupants of Blue Dorm smoked the peace-pipe forthwith.

CHAPTER IX

"MADDY"

REMOVE II. B had French for first lesson next morning; Joey was informed of the fact during getting-up-time next morning by an almost aggressively friendly Sybil, Barbara, and Noreen.

"Who takes us?" Joey asked, a little nervously. French was by no means her strong point.

"Maddy, of course—Mademoiselle de Lavernais."

"What's she like?"

Noreen screwed up her face. "Awfully old and dried up, and a sort of front thing on her head in tight curls."

"Can't think why Miss Conyngham doesn't have somebody younger," Syb chimed in. "No one else is really old at the Coll. I bet Maddy's sixty if she's a day."

"More," Barbara suggested. "Look at her wrinkles. She ought to be pensioned off or something; I should think she jolly well deserves it—she's been here more than twenty years someone told me."

“Is she nice?” asked Joey, thinking anxiously of irregular verbs and elusive idioms.

“Nice!—you wait till you go a howler in form!”

“Having me on?” demanded Joey, with instant suspicion.

“No, you stupid; can’t you see when we’re talking sense?” Noreen said. “I ought to know; I’m always in her black books. She simply can’t bear me.”

“Says Noreen doesn’t think or something,” Syb contributed.

“As if anyone could be bothered to think right through a stuffy French conversation class.”

“*What?*” shrieked Joey. “It isn’t French conversation, is it?”

“Isn’t it just?—Maddy says heaps of girls can write French decently, but hardly anyone can speak it; so every Wednesday morning Remove II. B has the treat—I don’t think!—of conversing with her in French, and you mayn’t just say, ‘*Il pluit,*’ or something like that, and then dry up; you’ve got to converse, and she goes on till she drags it out of you.”

“Does everyone?” asked Joey, palpitating.

“She picks the girls. Pretty sure to go for you as you’re new. She’ll want to know what your French is like.”

“She won’t take long to find out that it’s ut-

terly hopeless," Joey remarked, hunting for her shoes, which had gone under the bed.

"I say! wouldn't it be rather a rag to put Jocelyn—Joey, I mean—up to some perfectly awful French that would take half the lesson to correct?" suggested Noreen, of the fertile brain. "Then *we'd* get a rest."

"Brainy plan," approved Barbara. "But would you mind, Joey? You can't get into a row, you see, because she can't know if you really know any French or not; she'll only just point out to you where you're wrong, in the kind of tone which implies that they wouldn't keep idiots of your kind in France at any price, and you'll have to say, '*Merci bien,*' or is it '*Beaucoup*'?—I never can remember which—and '*Je comprends*', or is it '*C'est comprenné*?—one *does* get out in the hols!—at proper intervals, and look intelligent——"

"Never mind if it's a bit of a strain," Noreen contributed, and Joey, having a shoe all ready in her hand, not unnaturally hurled it at the speaker. Noreen dodged, and it got the window, and made a huge star.

"My Sunday hat and Dublin Castle!" Noreen exclaimed, craning round from her seat on the bed to examine the mischief. "You've gone and done it now, Joey—at least it was most my fault really. I'll tell Matron that."

"Rot! I threw the shoe," Joey said, rather dismayed. "I don't mind about Matron; she can't do much worse than the ghastly stuff she's been giving me—at least I hope she doesn't stop the beastly window out of my pocket-money?"

"No; they don't do that sort of thing here," Noreen said. "They just hold forth, and tell you carelessness is a sort of dishonesty and that sort of thing. You'll have to say you're sorry."

"Well, I am."

"And Matron will point out you've behaved like a kindergarten kid, and if she were Tiddles she wouldn't be surprised at your wanting to throw your shoes about. Comprenny?"

"Righto—I shall stick it," Joey assured her.

"They don't nag here—much," added the experienced Noreen for her comfort; "when you've been jawed or punished or both, it's over and done with. What about the French? Think you could do anything?"

"I might try," Joey said, with caution.

"But there won't be time now to put her up to it all," objected Barbara. "Why didn't we think of it earlier?"

"Why not let Joey, as she's new, try it on some other way?" put in Noreen. "Ask Maddy something that means a long screed in answer. Oh yes, I know she squashed me flat for doing it, but that was ages back, and she knew me and

my reputation. Now here's a nice, innocent, and probably good, new girl."

"Don't call me names!" interrupted Joey.

"I said *probably*; well, try and turn Maddy on, in all innocence and ignorance, my child, and the Form will love you for evermore. We are always absolutely stuck for subjects the first French day of term."

The prayer-bell rang insistently. "What would she *like* to talk about, do you think?" asked Joey desperately, catching at Noreen's sleeve; "the War?"

"Try the Franco-German affair; she was probably a blushing thing in a crinoline about that time—she'll enjoy telling us about it if we can only get her started."

"I'll try," Joey said valiantly and breathlessly upon the stairs, and she worried out the French for her request during breakfast.

Maddy met Remove II. B at nine o'clock precisely. Joey watched her mount the dais with a sinking heart. She was a little lady, who made no pretence of being anything but elderly, with a dried-up skin that pouched under her black eyes, and the rather dusty "front" upon which the girls had commented did not match the hair at the back of her small well-set head. She was shabbily dressed, and all the little air of distinction with which she wore her clothes could not

make them becoming. Joey decided that she should not like Mademoiselle de Lavernais.

Mademoiselle wasted no time in preliminaries. She said "Good-morning" to her class in clear, ringing accents, and they responded very properly. Then the real business began. In rapid French she mentioned that she hoped to hear much interesting conversation from the Form this morning, and—"Barbara, we should all like to learn your opinion on the Channel Tunnel."

Barbara became pink. "Je crois—bien—que c'est une bonne chose pour lesquels qui souffre de mal de mer," she blundered unhappily.

Mademoiselle threw up her hands in horror.

"Is it that I am taking the babies of the kindergarten?" she inquired. "How often am I to tell you that you *nefare*, *nefare* translate literally from the English idiom to the French. Noreen, let me hear you."

Noreen cast an agonised appeal on Joey. "What I think about the Channel Tunnel, Mademoiselle?" she asked.

"En Français, si'l vous plaît, mon enfant."

Noreen stared wildly around her for inspiration. "Je pense—je pense——"

"Continuez," said Mademoiselle inexorably.

"Je pense—que je n'ai pas des pensées sur le sujet—encore," poor Noreen informed her miserably.

"Fourteen years old, and without a thought on a subject so concerning the welfare of your great nation," Mademoiselle said, with slow scorn. "It is a pity almost that you have a nation, Noreen. You should belong to some miserable little German State, where *la patrie* is represented by the gendarme with his big fist, and the tax-collector. Find another subject that you can talk of—some of those that figure in the paper during your silly season will suit you well, I make no doubt."

Noreen, scarlet about the ears, was obviously unable to find a subject at all. Perhaps it was not wonderful! Joey, burning with resentment for her friend, rushed into the breach.

"Il serait tres"—she tried to think of the word for improving, but failing to see even a glimpse of it, unfortunately substituted "*amusante, si vous voulez dire á nous l'histoire d'une chose ou deux que vous avez vue pendant la guerre de soixante-dix quand les allemands et les français. . . .*"

Mademoiselle swung round upon the daïs and looked hard at Joey, standing up in her place, rather frightened and very floundering about the French, but sturdily determined to go through with the business she had undertaken. Mademoiselle heard her out, with no comment bad or good till she reached the word "*français,*"

then suddenly her heavy black eyes gave a great flash.

"You are, I think, a new girl, and therefore scarcely know, perhaps, how great an impertinence you commit," she said very quietly, but in a voice that was more dreadful than if she had screamed. "But any girl that is worthy of the name of English should understand that to ask a Frenchwoman, who has seen and remembers, to *amuse* her with stories of the time when France was trodden in the dust by *swine*, is to make an insult that can nefare be forgotten. Leave the classroom; I will not teach such a girl. Sybil, impart to me your views on the best length for summer holidays—perhaps that will not be beyond your range of intellect."

Joey heard no more; somehow she reached the door and stumbled out, feeling so indelibly disgraced that she had serious thoughts of taking the next train home. Now she came to think about it, it *was* a hopeless thing that she had said; how would she have liked it if the girls had asked her, Joey, to tell them a funny story about prisoners of war in German hands. Of course they were the same Germans—at least the fathers of the horrible Huns who had tortured the wounded and prisoners, and hurt little children like Tiddles. And Joey had used that word *amusante*, when Mademoiselle remembered things—per-

haps as bad as the things which Mums had never wished the children to read in the newspapers.

"If I knew more French I shouldn't have put it so *horribly*," poor Joey said to herself; but it didn't occur to her to blame Noreen and Syb and Barbara who had suggested this unfortunate plan in the first instance. She wandered up and down the passage in a kind of frenzy; she would have to go home, but honour demanded one should first wipe the floor with oneself before the outraged Maddy.

Joey thought no French lesson could ever have been half so long; she couldn't go away from that rather dreary and viewless passage, because she might miss Maddy when she came out. The temporary mistress who was taking Miss Craigie's place would go to the classroom as soon as Maddy had finished; that was all Joey knew.

At last there were steps along the passage, but it was the Senior Prefect who came in sight. She had a little three-cornered note in her hand, and was evidently in a hurry.

"Is Mademoiselle still with Remove II. B?" she asked briskly, and then as Joey murmured "Yes," she looked at her.

"It's the scholarship kid, isn't it? But why aren't you in class?"

"I was turned out," Joey mentioned in a low voice.

"Then you must have been behaving like a young silly," Ingrid told her crushingly; and then perhaps she saw the utter misery in Joey's face.

"But there's no need to be so tragic about it—do you suppose you're the only girl who has ever been turned out of a classroom? Tell Mademoiselle you're sorry and won't do it again—and don't do it again, that's all!"

With which excellent advice the Senior Prefect knocked at the classroom door, and went in with her note, leaving Joey outside to wonder miserably if Ingrid would condescend to speak to her at all if she knew.

Ingrid came out, and passed Joey with a good-natured nod. A minute later there were other steps in the passage, and the temporary mathematical mistress, rather blown about from a long bicycle ride on a windy day, hurried down towards the classroom, nervously afraid of being late.

"Do you know whether Mademoiselle de Lavernais has come out yet?" she asked.

"No, she hasn't."

"Are you waiting for my class? Are you in Remove II. B by the way?" the mistress said.

Joey foresaw rocks and shoals. "I'm so new I don't know what I'm to take and what I'm not," she temporised.

"Well, come in with me and we'll see. The other girls will know," suggested the mistress. She laid a friendly hand on Joey's shoulder. Joey wriggled away, with a deplorable lack of manners, and bolted up the passage, as far as the row of little music-rooms, with their double doors. She couldn't let herself be dragged into a maths class without at least trying to make Mademoiselle see that she had not meant to be as horribly unfeeling as she had sounded.

A door opened and shut: steps—rather tired, halting steps—came towards her. Joey screwed up her courage, and made a desperate plunge in the direction of the small, black, shapeless figure advancing towards her reading a note.

"Do you mind if I say it in English, because it is frightfully hard to say what you want in French," she blurted out. "I know I was unspeakable, but I didn't mean it truly, and I couldn't think of any French word except *amusante*, truthfully—French is such a slippery language when you're trying to talk. I didn't mean the Franco-German business could be funny—and my Father was killed in this war!"

Mademoiselle de Lavernais had stopped reading her note when Joey began to speak, but she said nothing at all till Joey had finished. Her black eyes were fixed unwaveringly on Joey's face, so fixedly that Joey wondered vaguely

through all her misery if she had an ink smudge there.

Mademoiselle suddenly laid a hand on her shoulder, and drew her into one of the little music-rooms.

“For me perhaps also the words I used said what I did not altogether mean,” she said slowly, “though I have not your excuse, my child, of finding your language ‘slippy,’ having been in this country since I was more young than you. I think I was not just to say you were not English, because you did not understand.”

“Thank you awfully,” Joey murmured.

“And your father has died for his country?” Mademoiselle went on. “Mine died when I was more young than you, but that was of a broken heart.”

“Because of the Germans winning?” Joey ventured.

“My home was in Alsace,” said Mademoiselle. “You—how would you have felt if the great Foch, the great Haig, and the great Americans had *not* conquered with the help of God, and your home had been handed over to the Hun.”

“I don’t know,” Joey said. It was unthinkable.

“You don’t know; you are fortunate. I had to know. But that is over, thank God; we have waited almost fifty years, but it is over.”

Mademoiselle de Lavernais seemed to have forgotten her, Joey thought; her dull black eyes had lit up—her plain, tired face was quite transformed. Joey wondered whether she ought to slip out and go to the maths mistress—another apology would certainly be needed there. Fortunately, Mademoiselle came back to earth in a minute. “But what do I talk of? We should both be at our classrooms, you, I fear, will be in trouble in that you are late. My class will merely rejoice that cross old Maddy has given them a little longer of liberty to chatter in English. Should you not be at mathematics? Come with me.”

She put her hand again on Joey’s shoulder, and they went down the passage to Classroom Remove II. B together. Mademoiselle knocked and went in.

“Miss Musgrave, you will of your kindness, I hope, forgive the lateness of this pupil, who was detained by me not by her fault,” she said. “The blame is all mine; I make you the apologies.”

“Oh, of course; that is all right, Mademoiselle,” Miss Musgrave said nervously. “Take your place, please; what is your name?”

“Jocelyn.”

“Take your place, Jocelyn.”

Joey couldn’t thank Mademoiselle in the mid-

dle of a class, but the look she gave her was eloquent enough. Mademoiselle smiled back, before she bowed to Miss Musgrave and departed to her own class.

Remove II. B discussed the extraordinary incident of that smile all through the interval for milk and buns, three-quarters of an hour later.

CHAPTER X

A SUNDAY OUT

COUSIN GRETA was as good or as bad as her word; Joey wasn't quite sure which way to look at it. On that first Sunday morning, while she, with the twenty other girls at Miss Lambton's table, was enjoying the Sunday luxury of late breakfast and hot sausages, a note was brought to Miss Lambton.

"Jocelyn Graham," she called.

Joey stood up.

"Miss Conyngham has sent to say that relations are coming to take you out. They will be here at 12.30. Go to the drawing-room when you come out of chapel."

"Yes, Miss Lambton."

Joey sat down, and went on with her sausages. She felt rather depressed; the only cheering part of the business was that by going out she would probably escape that unknown horror of saying her Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, and being questioned on them.

Noreen was sitting two places away. "What are they? Aunts, uncles, or what? Are they

good for chocolates, or will they point out that those are still four shillings a pound, and school-girls should be thankful for bread and margarine!"

"I expect the relation is my Cousin Greta, and she always used to bring us chocolates," Joey answered.

"Don't eat them all on the way home. Think of your precious health, my che-ild," cried half a dozen imploring voices.

Joey could take chaff better now; besides, the antipathy of the Redlanders to her village school had died a natural and speedy death.

"P'r'aps I'd better think of yours," she said.

"You little beast!" muttered Noreen, but rather inaudibly, "beast" being one of the expressions that even easy-going Miss Lambton did not pass at table.

There was a walk before chapel on Sundays, if weather allowed; Joey paired off with Gabrielle on this occasion, and found her sympathetic over the outing.

"It's always decent going out when you're at school, even if it's to the stuffiest people," she explained. "It's different, you know—that's it partly. There was a girl here—she's left now—whose only relation handy was a great-aunt who was quite deaf and almost blind, and rather childish too, poor thing. And there was nothing

whatever for Chrissie to do at her house but play with the cat, and no books except *Laneton Parsonage* and *The Fairchild Family*. But Chrissie liked going all the same; you see, she could tell the other girls she had a good time when she came back, and that was something."

"Yes, I suppose that would be something," Joey agreed, and went to get ready for chapel in much better spirits.

Redlands Chapel was very beautiful. Later on Joey came to know much of its story: that the wonderful black chancel screen had been rescued by a girl's father from an old barn on his estate, and went back to the stormy times of Henry VIII.'s devastating war upon the monasteries; that the beautiful reredos had been carved by an old pupil of the College who had gone out into the world to find fame. Three of the windows came from a little private chapel near by, and had suffered at the hands of Cromwell's Fifth Monarchy men.

She stood and knelt in her place about half-way down the aisle, feeling it all very strange after the plain little "Established" service at Calgarloch, where Mr. Craigie preached for an hour on end, and brought sweeties to Kirsty and Bingo in the afternoon if they had not fidgeted.

Joey liked the service, though she didn't know what singing could be till the second hymn; the

College always refusing to throw any enthusiasm into the strains of

Lord, behold us with Thy blessing,
Once again assembled here.

But with the second—"Onward! Christian Soldiers," the six hundred Redlanders fairly let go, swamping choir and organ. Joey found that she enjoyed that hymn. It is a wonderful feeling to join in with that crowd. She forgot that she had been rather lonely, in a pew full of strangers, with Gabrielle and Noreen both far away from her in the choir.

When the service was over she went, as ordered, straight to Miss Conyngham's room, where she found Cousin Greta—tall, thin, grey-haired, and distinguished-looking—conversing with Miss Conyngham.

Joey offered a cheek to her relative with exemplary politeness. Cousin Greta kissed her and then held her at arm's length, looking at her critically.

"My dear child, what a beanstalk for only thirteen! But height runs in the family," she added to Miss Conyngham; "my cousin, this child's father, was six foot two."

"Mums is tall as well," Joey put in aggressively.

"Yes, I suppose she is," agreed Cousin Greta, without interest. "Are you ready to come, Joey? I will bring her back—did you say in time for evening chapel—6.30? Very good, Miss Conyngham."

Cousin Greta and the Head shook hands, and Cousin Greta laid beautifully gloved fingers on Joey's shoulders, and walked her out in the wake of the perfect parlour-maid to the front door, where her Daimler was waiting.

Joey tried to look riotously happy, not so much, it is to be feared, from motives of politeness, as because she wanted to impress the other girls standing about in little groups near the entrance. She even waved condescendingly to one of the two big girls who had sat beside her at that first breakfast and taken so little notice of her presence. The senior tried to put her in her place by not returning the wave, but Joey knew they were envious, all the same. Of course, they couldn't know what a stupid sort of outing she was really going to have.

"And how do you like Redlands?" asked Cousin Greta, as the car slid smoothly down the drive.

"Oh, all right," Joey answered, still with caution.

"Have you made many friends yet?"

"Not whole ones—sort of half."

"What *do* you mean?"

"Oh, I like some of the girls," Joey said, getting red; "but that isn't being proper friends, is it?"

Cousin Greta "didn't know." Joey thought she had been an idiot to try and answer that question so truthfully. She might have realised that Cousin Greta wouldn't be likely to understand, and for the next ten minutes she patiently answered questions as to the health of Mums, the boys, and Kirsty, her own place in Form, and such-like. She also told Cousin Greta all that she thought Cousin Greta would like to know: what his late Headmaster had said about Gavin; the good place Ronnie had taken; Bingo's funny comment when the schoolmaster tried to teach him the first declension.

"I'm sure God didn't make this language the same time as He made nice fings like elephants."

"Your father's boys would have brains," said Cousin Greta approvingly.

"Father always said Mums had twice his," Joey fired out, getting hot and angry.

"Your father was very modest," Cousin Greta said, but she sighed. It occurred to Joey that perhaps Cousin Greta disliked the day together quite as much as she herself did. She made an effort to be pleasant; perhaps, after all, Cousin

Greta didn't mean to slight Mums; it was only her stupid way of talking.

"Do tell me about Father when he was a little boy," she asked.

"If you peep at the glass in my room when we come to Mote House you will know just what he looked like," Lady Greta told her more cheerfully.

Joey stared. "Am I like him? I never knew that."

"I see the likeness," Cousin Greta said, and was silent for a little while the car flew along the straight marsh road at a most exhilarating pace.

"I suppose your mother never heard anything more after the letter from that fellow-prisoner, which she sent me?" she asked at last.

"No, nothing; though Mums wrote and wrote, and went to meet the batch of prisoners from Wilhelmgradt after the Armistice, and Uncle Staff went on going to the War Office."

"It was a great blow to us all," said Lady Greta.

Joey bit back the remark that it was worst for Mums; after all, Mums wouldn't have liked her to say it. There was a little silence.

"Gracie is looking forward to seeing you," Cousin Greta went on at last. "Let me see, she

is just two years older than you are, I suppose."

"She doesn't go to school, does she?"

"No, I am afraid I am not quite a believer in school for girls. Besides, she has such a delightful governess, Miss Richards."

Joey supposed "How nice for her" was the proper thing to say, and said it; and that remark brought them to Mote Court.

Gracie met them at the door, a pretty but delicate-looking girl, very beautifully dressed. When Joey shook hands with her she suddenly realised that her own stockings were darned in the leg, where the darn showed a good deal.

However, Gracie was quite polite, and carried her guest off to her own room to take off her coat and hat and wash her hands for luncheon, and then to the schoolroom, where Miss Richards was sitting, playing Halma with a spare, freckled boy who was lying on the sofa, covered with a rug.

Gracie introduced Miss Richards, and then the boy as "My Cousin John."

Joey liked the look of John, though his best friends couldn't have called him anything but plain. But he had a pleasant and companionable grin, and a much more vigorous way of shaking hands than either Gracie or Miss Richards.

"We had better put away the Halma men, John," said Miss Richards. "The luncheon gong

will go directly, and you will like to talk to Gracie's little friend."

Joey wriggled inwardly at this description, but went and sat down by John's sofa. Anyhow, he looked easier to talk to than Gracie. "I didn't know you lived here," she said.

"I don't," John told her. "But I had a smash-up, you see, and Aunt Greta asked me here to get fit again!"

"John is in the Navy," Gracie explained. "He's a middy on the . . ."

"A snotty," corrected John in a warning growl. "You're at school here, aren't you?" he added, turning to Joey.

"I'm at Redlands."

"That's the big place out beyond the Round Tower?"

"Yes. I say, do you know anything about the tower?" Joey asked breathlessly.

"Aunt Greta's the one to ask—she lives here. Why? Are you specially keen on towers?"

"Joey comes from Scotland," Gracie said, as though a tower were an unknown spectacle in the north.

Joey was just going to explain that what specially interested her was not so much the tower as the queer lights that came from it, when the gong for luncheon sounded with a roar, and Gracie got up.

"Come along, Joey. John has his lunch up here."

Rather dull for John, Joey thought, as she followed her cousin obediently along corridors and downstairs to the dining-room. She would have liked to ask about him, and whether he would soon be better, but was afraid of seeming inquisitive, so left Gracie and Miss Richards to make polite conversation.

In the dining-room she was presented to Colonel Sturt, who was bald and rather morose, and gave her two fingers only when she shook hands. Then Cousin Greta motioned Joey to a chair on her own right, and luncheon began.

It was a very grand luncheon; mindful of what Gabrielle had said, Joey stored up an exact description of the mayonnaise and roast chickens, the cold sirloin and wonderful salad, the trifle, meringues and apricot-jam tartlets; they at least would be something to tell the girls about.

Cousin Greta saw to it that Joey made an excellent meal, but it was certainly a dull one. Colonel Sturt was upset by something he had read in his paper about Germans creeping back into the country; and Gracie was almost as obviously annoyed by her mother's refusal to let her do something or other that she wanted that afternoon. She did talk to Joey a little, but the two years between them seemed to make an im-

possible gulf, Joey thought. It was really rather a comfort when the long, grand luncheon was over, even though Cousin Greta swept Joey off to her own room for "a little talk"—rather an alarming suggestion.

Cousin Greta's room was a world of looking-glasses; Joey saw her own slim self reflected everywhere—a self who looked oddly spruce and tidy in the dark green velveteen best frock of Redlands, and with her mass of fair hair tied neatly back with a dark green bow. Her brown eyes under black lashes looked rather seriously back at this new tidy self reflected.

Cousin Greta came behind Joey and laid two hands on her shoulders.

"And now, barring the clothes, you know how your dear father used to look when he came to us for his holidays," she said, and Joey felt sorry for Cousin Greta suddenly, and as though she were minding a good deal about Father under all her cold, languid ways.

"I'm glad I'm like," she said, "though he wanted us all to be like Mums. But I'll never be anything like him in splendidness, worse luck; now the war is over, there isn't even a chance of serving your country."

Cousin Greta shivered. "My dear child, don't talk as though you were sorry this ghastly war is over!" which was one of the speeches that set

Joey's teeth on edge, and were impossible to answer.

She said no more, and Cousin Greta took a tremendous box of chocolates from the chest of drawers and told Joey she was to take them back with her to school. Then she mentioned that she always rested for an hour after luncheon, and did Joey think she could find her way back to the schoolroom, where she would find Gracie? Joey thanked Cousin Greta, and was sure she could, and in due course, and after taking two or three wrong turnings, she found herself back at the schoolroom door.

She heard no sound of voices; it did not sound as though anybody were inside, and sure enough when she opened the door she found nobody in the room but John.

He grinned at her in a friendly fashion. "Where's Gracie?" he asked.

"I don't know," Joey said. She took some credit to herself for not adding, "I don't care."

John laughed. "Well, come and talk to me till she comes along."

Joey established herself on a chair by his sofa. "What do you do when you're a snotty?" she asked. "We know more about the Army, you see."

"Keep a look out when the deck's all ice, mostly," John said. "Of course, sometimes there

was a scrap—not half often enough, though—and when you get your signal you’ve to be jolly quick or the other chap snaffles it all!”

“How do you signal?” Joey asked.

“Wireless mostly. Of course you have to know all kinds of signals. Can you read Morse?”

“No, I can’t.”

“I’ll teach you—it’s as easy as winking.”

And John kept his word. Joey was fairly safe on the Morse alphabet in half an hour, and felt immensely pleased with herself. She was only too delighted that Gracie stayed away so long; she was beginning to enjoy herself for the first time that day.

John directed her to a table-drawer, where there was an electric torch and a whistle; he took the torch and she the whistle; and she went over to the window to make her first attempt at “sending” in Morse. She boggled rather over it, and had to be prompted in two or three letters; but John was encouraging, and assured her she was picking it up very quickly. Then he proceeded to reply, very slowly, with long and short flashes from the electric torch. Directly he began Joey knew of what it reminded her—the curious blue flashes she had seen from the leads on that first night she was at school.

She meant to ask John about them after he

had finished his Morse sentence—just now that needed all her concentration.

“Long, short, long, short,” she spelt out. C—is that right, John? Short—long—don’t tell me! I know. A—long—short—oh, that’s the opposite!—don’t tell me—N.”

“Right—group,” said John. “Ready for next word?”

He flashed, “Short, long—long—long,” Joey almost shrieked in her excitement. It was a letter like that she had seen in the rainy darkness from the leads.

“J,” she spelt, and then she felt she must tell John about that light without waiting for the slow, laborious spelling out of the next word. She was just going to speak, but she had to see what the next letter was, and in that instant she was seeing, Gracie spoke under the widely opened window. Gracie’s voice was very clear, and every syllable came quite distinctly up to Joey at the window.

“Yes; I’m awfully annoyed about it, Eleanor, but I can’t get mother to see reason. I suppose she feels she ought to be nice to this child, who is a sort of cousin; but it couldn’t have hurt her to go back an hour or two earlier and leave the car free for me, at the time I want it. As it is, mother says she isn’t going to send the little nuisance back till half-past six.”

"What a shame! I should strike at small schoolgirl cousins who have to be kept all day, and sent back in the car."

That was another voice, evidently the voice of the girl to whom Gracie was talking. Joey forgot all about Morse, and faced John with hot cheeks.

"I won't do any more signalling, I think; thanks no end for teaching me," she said. "I'll go and find Miss Richards, or someone."

John held out a thin, scarred hand. "I say, don't you worry about Gracie," he growled. "Shocking bad form to talk like that, but she doesn't mean it."

"I don't want to be sent back in the car," poor Joey burst out. "It's only six miles—who wants a car?"

She stopped. It wasn't possible to tell John, who was Gracie's cousin, that what hurt so much in the speech was the sense that they all thought her a nuisance who must be entertained as a duty. Perhaps John had really been finding her a nuisance too, when he taught her signalling. Joey's one thought was to get away from all.

"Thanks awfully for being so nice to me," she said, "but I'll go now, if you don't mind."

"Here, wait a bit," John urged; but Joey was already through the door and out in the passage. She would say good-bye and thank you to

Cousin Greta, and ask if she might walk home, as it was such a lovely afternoon.

But then poor Joey remembered that Cousin Greta was lying down and must not be disturbed. What could she do?

Joey suddenly entertained the quite reprehensible idea of saying nothing to anybody, but walking home all by herself.

CHAPTER XI

THE SEA-ROKE

IT was all quite easy. She had taken off her coat and hat in Gracie's room; Joey made her way there—hurried into her things, and ran downstairs. She only met one servant; the place was in a dozy, Sunday-afternoon condition. She got out at a side door, and, avoiding the front drive, where she thought she might be seen and stopped, she darted away over well-kept lawns, crossed the ha-ha at a jump, and landed in the park. Here she slightly slackened her headlong pace—nobody would see her among the trees—and began to compose her letter of apology to Cousin Greta. She supposed she was being dreadfully rude, and it was a rudeness which would be horribly difficult to explain, without complaining of Gracie—naturally an unspeakable idea.

She had only got as far as "Dear Cousin Greta,—I hope I was not very rude, but . . ." when she cleared the park, and crossed the straight marsh road. She had decided to go by the fields, in case somebody should be sent after

her. If she kept in a line with the road, even at a distance of half a mile or so on the sea-ward side, she would be quite safe, she thought. She gave a glance around her to make sure of the lie of the land; it was all quite easy, for the October afternoon was clear, and a peculiar transparent luminosity lay on the glittering horizon. Then she plunged forward, concocting her letter to Cousin Greta as she went. It must certainly be written and sent off to-night, for there was no question about it, she had been disgracefully rude. Only she couldn't go on being a nuisance to people who didn't want her and invited her out only from a sense of duty.

“DEAR COUSIN GRETA,—I hope I was not very rude, but I found I had to get back earlier than I expected, and . . . and . . . I didn't want to disturb you as you were lying down.”

Joey didn't know that in the struggle to compose that difficult letter of apology to Cousin Greta she had diverged a little from the straight line that she had fixed for herself, and was bearing down farther from the road with every step she took. The letter took a great deal of pumping out; one had to try and be truthful, and at the same time no telltale. When politeness had to come in as well, it made each sentence most

terribly difficult, and Joey wrestled with that letter in much affliction of spirit, and went farther and farther out of her way without ever seeing where she was going.

The bit about not wanting to disturb Cousin Greta was not absolutely true, because Joey had been really glad she had been lying down; still, perhaps it might pass—one couldn't say one was glad anyway.

"It was very kind of you to have me out," Joe went on; "thank you most awfully. About my going back to Redlands alone. I always go about alone at home, unless one of the others happens to be with me, so I hope you won't mind that. I'm not a kid, you know.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"JOEY."

Joey finished the letter in her mind, and said it over to herself. It wouldn't take long to write down, that was one comfort—and she hoped it would make Cousin Greta understand she wasn't quite the ill-mannered girl she had seemed. And as she finished saying it and got it finally off her chest, she knew suddenly that she was very cold, and that a clammy white wall was surrounding her on every side, that beneath her feet was green bogginess, and of the road or any landmark there was not so much as a trace.

Joey had heard of the sea-roke in books, but that didn't make her very clear about it now she met it. She couldn't think how such a thick, dead-white fog could have come up without her noticing it; but here it was, that was very certain. She began to wish that she had kept to the high road, or left the composition of that difficult letter till she got back to Redlands. However, the roke was here, and she was on the Deeps and not the road; there was nothing for it but to keep as straight on as possible—or better still, turn to her left and strike the road.

Joey settled that would be the wisest thing to do, even if it took her out of her way at first; she turned to the left and went as straight as she could.

The road seemed to take a very long time to be reached; Joey couldn't think how she could have come so far from it. She stumbled on and on, finding the ground very quaggy, and walking exceedingly difficult. And then she jumped back only just in time, for she had all but walked into one of those deep ditches with slanting sides that drain the Deeps at intervals, and are a very real danger, with their thick ooze of mud below the water, and their slippery banks. Joey knew that she had crossed no ditch on her way down from the road; she began to feel a little pricking of uneasiness. She was very, very tired; her legs

ached, and she seemed to herself to have walked miles and miles through this cold, clammy, white wall. And if she couldn't strike the road; how much farther might she not have to go? And was all this struggling getting her any nearer to Redlands?

Joey was not a nervous person, but she sat down at the side of the dyke to try and get her bearings, with rather a sinking heart. She had just remembered that in a fog you tend to wander in a circle; could she have been doing that all this long time when she hoped that she was at least getting on a little?

"What a bally nuisance!" she said aloud. Of course one couldn't acknowledge, even to oneself, that it was anything worse than that.

"I suppose I had better wait till the fog lifts," she said, wondering whether it were the close, white wall or the sinking sensation under her belt that made her voice so hollow. And just as she said it there came a little breeze, and the roke lifted for a minute, hanging around like cotton-wool clouds that wanted to settle on the earth and couldn't quite make up their minds to do so; and Joey saw, some thirty yards away from her—not the road—there was no sign of that—but a narrow plank bridge that crossed the dyke and, straight in a line with it, the mysterious Round Tower.

Joey did not waste a minute. She ran for her life, and was over the bridge before the roke came down again—baffling, clinging, frightening. But the tower was so near, and there was no dyke between; she had seen that. She ran straight on in the white darkness, and fell breathlessly against the rough wall of the tower five minutes later.

The roke was thicker than ever after that momentary lifting, but Joey didn't care now. There was shelter and safety in the tower, and she felt as though having reached it was the next best thing to being safe at Redlands. Noreen had told her it really was a good four miles from the College, but it seemed comfortingly close when one remembered that night on the leads.

Joey felt her way round it until she came to a narrow door standing at least three feet above the ground. She felt the ledge on which the door opened with her fingers, scrambled up to it, and tried the door. It was fastened, but she carried a strong pocket-knife, and inserting the stoutest blade into the chink, she forced back the bolt which secured it on the inside, and opened the door. Then, with a delightful thrill of mystery, she scrambled through into the tower.

It was black-dark inside, not white-dark as it was out; for the one narrow window on this ground floor was shuttered. Joey longed for an electric torch. She stumbled on a cautious step

or two; then, growing bolder, walked on three or four more, with hands outstretched. Her hands came into contact with a narrow shelf, and on it, joy! she felt a match-box. Joey struck a match, feeling as though all her troubles were over.

The flash gave her a rough notion of grey walls and an iron ladder running up almost perpendicularly to the right of her, and it showed something else as well—a lantern that stood upon the same shelf where she had found the matches. Joey seized upon it, as a shipwrecked mariner might on a spar, and lit it. Holding it in her hand, she felt strong enough to face anything; it was the darkness which had been so frightening.

Holding the lantern on high she set out to explore her refuge; after all, for whatever reason, it was rather exciting to find oneself in the mysterious Round Tower at last.

The floor above was so high that the rays of her lantern could not reach it, but she was sure there was another floor because of the ladder, which obviously must lead somewhere. Joey thought she would go up it presently and see for herself, but at present the ground floor of the tower presented attractions. It was strewn with a quantity of loose stones and débris of all kinds, except in one place—one can hardly say corner in a round tower—where it would seem to have

been swept smooth. Joey, having wandered round the loose-jointed grey walls, examining them with interest, came to the place where the débris was comparatively scanty, and held her lantern down to light the place.

A voice came up to her from below the floor, a rather thin, peevish voice that sounded exceedingly tired, and had a curious accent.

"You are at least two hours earlier than you said you would be; how can you then expect me to be ready?"

Joey quite jumped—the voice was so entirely unexpected. Then she realised that she must be taken for somebody else.

"I can't be anyone you expected two hours later, because I didn't know myself about walking home and this old fog," she said. "Do tell me, are you down a trap-door, or what?"

A square of floor lifted with some difficulty, and a head appeared—the head of a pale, unhealthy-looking young man, with large, startled, blue eyes.

"I say, I hope I didn't frighten you coming in like this," Joey said politely. "But the fog—the sea-roke, I think they call it, is so beastly, and I couldn't find my way back."

The young man came altogether out from the trap-door. Joey didn't think much of his nerves; his hands were trembling and he looked as though

Gavin could have knocked him down quite easily.

"Do you live here?" Joey asked, as he did not speak. "I hope you don't mind my coming in like this; but Noreen, one of the Redlands girls, tells me that the Deeps are really rather dangerous when the roke is about."

The young man seemed to recover his breath.

"You are a Redlands young lady, are you? Surely your mistress does not know that you are wandering about the Deeps alone?"

"Miss Conyngham? No, I don't suppose she does," Joey said easily. "I didn't know myself till it happened, but of course I ought to have come by the road."

"It would be *much* safer," the young man said impressively. He did not answer Joey's question about living in the tower; but proceeded to tell her story upon story of accidents happening on the Deeps to people who strayed there in the fog or the dark. Joey thought his stories were a little like the *Cautionary Tales*; from his account the sea-roke perpetually lay in wait, in company with horrid oozy spots where people disappeared with no trace left to tell how they had died. His stories were so interesting that Joey forgot her desire to explore, and sat by his side on a great block of fallen stone, listening with all her ears, and foreseeing a thrilling time in Blue Dorm this evening. She was so absorbed that she never



"I HOPE I DIDN'T FRIGHTEN YOU COMING IN LIKE THIS," JOEY
SAID POLITELY

noticed the lightening of the roke, until a long, narrow bar of sunshine fell through a chink in the shutters of the window, making the red glow of the lantern look pale and unnatural. Then she jumped up in a hurry, and held out her hand. The post went out at six on Sundays, and she still had four miles to walk before she could write that apology to Cousin Greta. She must go at once now it would be safe to cross the piece of marsh-land to the road. She held out her hand to the young man.

“Good-bye,” she said. “You’ve been a brick to me, and I’ve enjoyed your stories most awfully. I’ve had no end of a good time here, and it’s jolly thrilling, when you haven’t done it, to know you might have been drowned so easily, isn’t it? It’s been a topping afternoon. Thanks ever so.”

She shook hands with the young man, whose easily scared breath seemed to have departed again, for he gasped and said nothing.

Joey turned her back upon the Round Tower and turned her face in the direction of the road, now plainly to be seen. It was not till she had reached it that it struck her that she had been rather stupid not to ask leave to come again, and bring her friends. But perhaps now the young man was used to her, he wouldn’t mind if three or four of them turned up one afternoon, and

asked for some more of his stories, and permission to explore? Joey settled in her own mind that she would share the privilege with Noreen and Gabrielle at least. But one couldn't go back to ask leave, with the thought of the six o'clock post and that letter of apology still to be written for it.

Joey covered the ground at her best pace, never looking back; reached the road quite successfully and, by dint of running most of the way, arrived, panting, at the side door of Redlands, just as the gong sounded for five o'clock tea.

CHAPTER XII

IN TROUBLE

JOEY slipped into her place at table, hoping that Miss Lambton would not notice her grubby hands and rough hair. There had only been just time to tear off her coat and hat in the nearest cloakroom, belonging to the Sixth Form by right; tidying had to go by the board.

She squeezed in between Noreen and Barbara. "I've got a scrummy box of chocs," she whispered.

Noreen gave quite a start. "Hullo! You've turned up. Half the Lower School have been leading weary lives about you this afternoon!"

"Why?" demanded Joey.

"Oh, your cousin 'phoned, apparently, and said you'd gone off by yourself, and the chauffeur couldn't see you along the road, and then the roke came up and they were afraid something might happen to you. . . ."

"Likely—I'm not a kid," Joey stated, with immense scorn. "But I'm awfully sorry anyone bothered. Am I in a row?"

"'Fraid so. What possessed you to bolt off like that, you goat?"

"Oh, I don't know. I wanted to come back."

"You're cracked, I think," Barbara said uncompromisingly. "Don't you know girls are always sent back when they're at school?"

"I couldn't know there was going to be such a rotten old fuss about it," Joey complained. "However, if I'm in for it, I am. I've got the chocs, anyhow; we'll orgy in Blue Dorm to-night."

"Jocelyn Graham!" Miss Lambton spoke sharply from her end of her table. "Hurry with your tea, please, and then go to Miss Conyng-ham."

"Yes, Miss Lambton," Joey answered ruefully, and then added to Noreen, "Hope she'll leave me time to write and apologise to Cousin Greta."

"You'll be lucky if she's finished rowing you by supper-time," Noreen remarked unkindly, but added, after a second, "Don't worry; I don't suppose you'll catch it much, as you're new. Say you didn't know."

"Say there's insanity in the family and you *hope* it isn't coming out," suggested Barbara; but Joey was too much depressed to be drawn by this remark. She finished her tea in haste,

and was dispatched by Miss Lambton to Miss Conyngham, without waiting for grace.

Miss Conyngham's "Come in" was rather severe. Joey screwed up her courage and opened the door.

"Please, Miss Lambton said I was to come," she said meekly.

Miss Conyngham was standing by the fire; she looked tall and imposing—much taller and more terrifying than in that first interview, poor Joey thought.

"What have you been doing, Jocelyn?" she asked, and her voice, though quiet, was very cold.

Joey pulled herself together.

"I'm very sorry if it wasn't the right thing," she said; "but I came away earlier from my cousin's, because—because—I wanted to—and I've made up my letter of apology, truly; quite a polite one, and if you could finish rowing me in time for the post, I should be frightfully obliged, because Mums hates impoliteness."

Miss Conyngham said nothing for a minute, but looked attentively at Joey.

"You are thirteen, I think," she said, at last, "old enough to understand that you have done rather an inexcusable thing this afternoon. If it had been little Bertillia, I should not have been surprised—one expects a baby to occasionally act on an absurd impulse, and that is why babies are

in charge of someone, always. You are a girl of thirteen, with plenty of brains if you choose to make use of them, and yet, because presumably you were not enjoying yourself, you were guilty of very gross discourtesy towards your cousin, and of a breach of trust towards me. I grant that perhaps you did not understand it is a college rule that no girl goes out alone; but you heard me arrange with your cousin to bring you back in time for chapel at 6.30, so you knew what my wishes were."

"Yes," murmured Joey, staring hard at a picture opposite—a little patch of purple heather, and a group of yellowing birches that reminded her of Calgarloch and home. Noreen and Barbara had prepared her for a row, but she had *not* been prepared for the horrid effect of the Head's quiet, cold voice.

"Your cousin telephoned here in great anxiety when she found that you had gone," Miss Conyngham went on, "and when there was no sign of you on the road we all knew you must be coming by the Deeps, in the sea-roke. You did a very dangerous as well as a very wrong thing, Jocelyn; do you know that?"

"The man in the tower told me so, most kindly," Joey explained; "but I didn't do it on purpose. Honour! And I had a reason, a real proper reason for leaving Cousin Greta's on my

own—only it wasn't one I could say to her. It *wasn't* just not enjoying myself: I was enjoying myself quite with John—that is Gracie's snotty cousin, worth ten of her any day . . .”

“That will do,” interrupted Miss Conyngham. “I am glad you had any reason in what you did; but nothing can make it excusable. I have always been proud to trust our Redlands girls in every way; do you realise that when you act as you have done you are bringing discredit on us all? And a girl owes loyalty to her school above everything!”

Joey swallowed hard. “Well, I'm frightfully sorry, Miss Conyngham. I . . . I should think you had better punish me—only, might I go now, because of writing to Cousin Greta?”

“You had better telephone to your cousin,” Miss Conyngham said gravely. “I will put you through in a minute. Yes, I think you must be punished, not because I am angry but to help you to remember. You are not to talk to the others in Blue Dormitory for a week, and go to bed directly after supper during that time. Do you think you can remember?”

Joey gasped. “You couldn't make it French verbs instead? I'm awful at French verbs—ask Maddy.”

“People don't choose their own punishments, Jocelyn,” the Head told her, with the ghost of a

smile. "It must be as I said: can you remember, do you think? You see, I am trusting to your honour."

"Yes, I'll remember," Joey said mournfully, "but it will be beastly. I hope it will square up all the bother I've given you a bit, though."

"We will see what it can do," said Miss Conyngham in a kinder voice. "Now I will put you through to your cousin."

The telephone was still rather a mystery to Joey; but she squeezed the middle of the receiver as Miss Conyngham directed, and said "Hullo." Then Miss Conyngham went out and left her.

"Is that you, Cousin Greta?" Joey inquired in a high-pitched unnatural voice. "Then, please, I'm most awfully sorry, and I didn't mean to be rude, or make you anxious—just I thought I'd better come home early. . . ."

Cousin Greta interrupted. "I know, dear; John told me. Don't think any more about it; I am only too thankful you are safe. You must come over on another Sunday very soon, and we will try and give you a really happy time."

Joey felt more choky than she had done through all Miss Conyngham's harangue.

"It's no end brickish of you," she stammered, forgetting to speak in what she thought was a telephone voice, and becoming much more audible in consequence. "You were fearfully kind

to-day, and it's frightfully nice of you not to be mad!"

She rang off, and went to find her chocolates, feeling distinctly happier. She met Noreen in the passage, and thrust the box into her hands.

"Look here, you'd better keep them and orgie," she said. "I'm not to talk for a week in dorm."

"What a sickening shame! But we'll keep the chocs till the week's up," Noreen said cheerfully.

"My hat-box will do; Matron never pokes her nose into that. Keep smiling, old thing; it's rotten, I know, but we'll simply have the bust of our lives when the week's up, and you're clear."

Joey went up to bed directly after supper that night as commanded, but feeling less depressed than might have been expected. For one thing, Miss Conyngham had addressed her in quite an ordinary tone at supper; for another, Cousin Greta had been so unexpectedly nice. And Noreen's friendship came in a good third. Joey looked forward determinedly to next Sunday, when chocolates should be eaten in wild profusion in the watches of the night, to the accompaniment of the nervous young man's gruesome stories of what happened to people wandering casually about the Deeps.

CHAPTER XIII

"THE THREE MUSKETEERS"

MISS CRAIGIE was to come back on the day after Joey was restored to the ordinary privileges of Blue Dorm. Miss Conyngham sent for Joey after breakfast and mentioned the fact, asking very kindly if she would like to go and meet the four train, instead of joining her form "croc."

"Choose a companion," she said; "and, of course, I trust you to go and come back by the road, Jocelyn."

Joey coloured up. "It's ever so good of you, Miss Conyngham; of course I'll play fair. But please, is there ever a time when you could let us go on the Deeps?—for that tower is most frightfully interesting."

"The owner lives in London, I believe, and doesn't allow people to go over it," Miss Conyngham said. "It isn't supposed to be very safe now, for scrambling about in. But I will try to find out if he would have any objections to my taking a party of you girls, if you are so very keen."

“I think it would do that nervous chap good to see some company,” urged Joey. “You can’t think what his jumpiness was like, Miss Conyngham.”

Miss Conyngham was as usual extremely busy, and could not wait to enter into the question.

“Which companion, Jocelyn?”

“*Could* I have two?” asked Joey, greatly daring.

Miss Conyngham considered. “I don’t see any objection, if you will all behave very steadily. Remember the credit of Redlands is in your hands. Whom do you want?”

“Please, Gabrielle and Noreen.”

Miss Conyngham smiled. “Very well. Are you three friends?”

Joey had become a good deal more certain since Cousin Greta asked that question.

“Rather, Miss Conyngham.”

“I am glad to hear that. Gabrielle is a very good sort of friend to have, Jocelyn.”

“And Noreen is a frightfully exciting one,” Joey explained—and then remembered in time it would be better not to explain why.

She discovered that she had gone up in the opinion of the Lower School now that Miss Conyngham had actually picked her out to meet Miss Craigie. The mathematical mistress had

many adorers, it appeared—and meeting trains could only be done by very special permission.

Ingrid Latimer herself accosted Joey in the mid-morning interval, demanding what she meant by going.

“I suppose Miss Conyngham thought I should like it,” Joey said, slightly flustered by the question from one so great as the Senior Prefect.

“Rubbish! As though the Head would stop to think about that,” Ingrid answered crushingly. “Think again, Kid. Is she an aunt of yours by any chance?”

“No—but we both live in Scotland, you see,” Joey suggested.

“The cheek of the babe—as though Scotland were a private belonging of those two,” burst in another huge Sixth Former, and Ingrid suddenly put both arms round Joey and lifted her on to a desk. “Now there you stay, until you have supplied a really adequate reason why you—merely an uppish new kid—should be granted the glorious privilege of meeting our Miss Craigie.”

Joey considered. “Want the real reason?”

“Yes, and hurry up with it.”

Joey grinned. “Then go on wanting it!”

The bell for Third Lesson rang violently.

“Oh, get off that desk and go to your classroom,” ordered Ingrid. “You are the purple

limit in assertiveness. *I* don't know why *I* put up with it."

"P'r'aps because you can't help it," suggested Joey, and then she scuttled past Ingrid at her best speed, and joined a gasping Noreen at the door.

"Are you whole and entire?" Noreen demanded. "My dear Joey, Ingrid will strew the floor with your remains if you don't look out. *I'd* never dare speak to her like that; *I'd* sooner cheek Miss Conyngham."

"*I* don't mind Ingrid," Joey boasted, vain-gloriously. "It's rather sport to see what she'll say next."

"No talking!" rapped out the Latin master, and Noreen began to gabble over her work to herself with great energy.

Joey felt fairly sure of hers, so devoted the spare two or three minutes, while Mr. Reade surveyed his notes, to drawing an extremely fancy portrait of herself and Ingrid walking down the Queen's Hall arm in arm, while portions of the Lower School cowered in doorways, or hurried obsequiously to right and left. This work of art was duly shown to Noreen, as soon as a flustered Barbara was put on to construe; Noreen retorted with a furious "Just you wait!"

Joey's assertiveness was kindly ignored in the afternoon, however, in view of the fact that she

had won the privilege of meeting the train for her friends, and the three set out very cheerfully and a good ten minutes earlier than they need have done.

"How's the Professor?" Joey asked, as they passed the Lab, where she had spent those purgatorial minutes on her first arrival. It had been arranged by Miss Conyngham that she should not take chemistry till next term, in view of the host of bewildering new subjects that descend upon a girl fresh to school.

Noreen screwed up her eyes. "Well, his temper isn't on the mend. If he goes on being such a beast I shall cook up a pathetic letter to the pater and tell him I'm overworked."

"I should think *he* is," suggested Gabrielle quietly. "Have you noticed how pouchy he is under the eyes?—as though he didn't get enough sleep."

"Well, whatever is the matter with him, he's a holy terror to work with," Noreen declared unsympathetically. "I say, Gabrielle, I wish Joey did take stinks—her uppishness would probably drive him clean over the border, and we shouldn't have to bear with him any more."

"You've jolly well got to be uppish here if you don't want to be absolutely squashed," Joey explained. "I expect the Professor has war-strain; there was an English lady came to stay with us

who simply couldn't stand Bingo blowing a trumpet anywhere near her because she had that, poor thing."

"P'r'aps he has a bad conscience, and is doing something beastly with his stinks," suggested Noreen. "I say, wouldn't it be a good thing to find out which it is? If it's war-strain—well, I'll bear his utter hatefulness and calling me 'fat-head' before the class, with cheerfulness; though I'm sure he's too old and too stout to have fought the Huns—still, he *may* have done munitions and used his chemistry that way . . ."

"Wasn't he here in the war?" asked Joey.

"Rather not. He only came last term, and nobody could stand him then. He's worse now. So if it's an evil conscience—I say, Joey, you old slacker, why don't you take stinks? You could help no end in the Sherlock Holmes business. Tell you what. I'll smuggle you in next time—Cicely Wren is in San with a throat—he won't notice who's there as long as he has his proper tale of jumpy victims."

"Let's," Joey said; but much to her surprise and disappointment, Gabrielle interfered quite decidedly.

"No, that wouldn't do. You mustn't, Joey. Don't try and get her to, Noreen."

"Don't see why not," grumbled Noreen, but Joey noticed that she yielded to the rather small

Head of the Lower School with only that one murmur.

It was a dull, lowering afternoon, and the Round Tower, standing up before the three, looked gloomy and forbidding.

"Wonder if the jumpy young man is there now?" Joey remarked. The whole story of her adventure had been joyfully told last night in Blue Dorm, to the accompaniment of a most unwise amount of chocolates, and all Blue Dorm was as keen to explore the shaky tower as she was herself. And she and Gabrielle had shared a milk tumbler at Break, after which Gabrielle had been quite as much stirred up as the other three were.

"It strikes me," said Noreen, "that we are living in a mystery—probably lurid—and certainly topping. Why should Joey's man be so jumpy?" She paused dramatically.

"P'r'aps an air-raid bomb fell near him," suggested Joey.

"Egg! A bomb took most of my Granny's bed-room wall out one night, and she didn't turn a hair. English people don't."

"P'r'aps he's Belgian. He didn't seem quite English somehow."

"Well, if you meet him casually drop into French, and see how he takes it."

"Drop into French yourself," urged Joey;

"you always find that so jolly easy in French conversation class."

"There! Listen to her, Gabrielle! Ever know anything so cheeky?—and I'm nearly a year older," complained Noreen.

Gabrielle was a peacemaker. "Oh, don't rag, you two. I want to think about the Professor. I wonder whether Miss Conyngham knows quite how—how cranky he is? He quite frightened a lot of the babies who were playing about near the door of the Lab, the other day, Rosie told me. He simply yelled at them, and no one ought to do that with babies. It wasn't as though they were trying to go in, or anything of that sort."

"I believe it's an evil conscience he's got," urged Noreen, with relish. "Why should he go for the babies otherwise? There's no sense in it."

"Unless it's like our war-strainy visitor and Bingo's trumpet," Joey said. "But she didn't go for him—she only asked frightfully nicely if he would mind blowing it farther off. The Professor *is* a pig to the kids; I've noticed it. Do you know Tiddles will never play that side of the house at all?"

"He hasn't gone and frightened poor little Tiddles, has he?" demanded Gabrielle indignantly.

"I don't know. I never asked. But she can't

bear him," Joey said. "She won't come round that way, even with me."

Gabrielle ruffled up like an angry robin. "Well, that settles it. Of course, one can't go sneaking of him to Miss Conyngham when it may be war-strain, but I shall ask the Professor myself if he will mind being careful where the babies are concerned, poor little things."

Noreen and Joey gasped. "You won't? Why, he'll be furious."

"It's my job to look after things like that," Gabrielle said firmly. "It's the choice between pointing out quietly to him that babies mustn't be frightened, and telling Miss Conyngham what he's been doing—and I'm Head of the Lower. And nobody tells about unfairness and things like that at Coll; you just bear them, or alter them for yourself."

"Well, you're a sport, Gabrielle," Noreen remarked admiringly. "I wouldn't have the pluck."

"Of course I shall put it quite politely," Gabrielle told them. "Just say I am sure he would be most disturbed if he knew that he frightened the babies, and so on. I don't suppose he does it on purpose."

"I do," Noreen said stubbornly. "Don't you, Joey?"

"Haven't seen enough of him—but I do think

he's a terror," Joey agreed; and then the station came in sight and they left off talking about the Professor and his ways, and talked of Miss Craigie instead.

"You'll have to buck up over your maths now, Joey," Gabrielle remarked. "She'll be so frightfully keen to see you go top, if she's a friend of yours."

"Joey is rather brainy over them," Noreen remarked kindly. "I sometimes fear she's going to turn into a swot after all."

"I'm not. I've been in quite as many rows for talking in maths class as you, anyhow," Joey retorted.

"Well, nobody talks when Miss Craigie takes maths," Gabrielle said, and Noreen agreed a trifle ruefully. "No, that's a true bill. You're a frightfully strenuous crowd in Scotland, Joey. Glad I wasn't born there."

"It's really rather funny we three should be friends," Joey remarked. "Gabrielle English, Noreen Irish, and I Scotch."

"We ought to make a pretty good alliance, don't you think?" said Gabrielle in her quiet way.

"The three Musketeers," suggested Noreen. "Let's stick together like they did—and I only wish we could go in for as many rows!"

At which pious aspiration both Joey and Ga-

brielle laughed, for Noreen was notorious at Redlands for the number and extent of her rows.

The train was rather late, but it came at last, and among the few people getting out at Mote Deeping, was a neat figure in a very well-cut coat and skirt, who was only about half Mr. Craigie's ungainly size, and not at all like him at first sight; though Joey came a little later on to recognise the familiar twinkle of the deep-set eyes and the kindly smile. Just then she only knew Miss Craigie by the ecstatic exclamation of Noreen and Gabrielle, "That's her!"

Miss Craigie shook hands with them, and she seemed to know who Joey was without a need of Gabrielle's polite introduction. At the earnest request of all the three, she consented to put all her luggage into one of the wheezy cabs and walk with them to Redlands.

She laid a hand on Joey's shoulder as they left the little station. "Well, how goes it?"

Joey liked her voice, with its touch of soft Scotch accent, and her eyes were very kind. She took a deep breath.

"I've messed up my quilt taking it on the roof, and Matron says it's a disgrace and ought to make me ashamed every time I go to bed. And I've starred a window, so it had to be mended; and I've got into a row with the Head for arriv-

ing home alone, and with Professor Trouville for tidying his old Lab——"

"That was my fault!" interrupted Noreen.

"And been turned out of French class once—but Maddy was fearfully decent after—and out of maths class twice for ragging. . . ."

"I begin to feel quite anxious," Miss Craigie said tranquilly; but even Joey understood the truth of Noreen's statement, that there was no ragging when Miss Craigie taught.

With Noreen squeezing her arm affectionately on one side and Joey holding rather shyly to the other, Miss Craigie walked the two miles to Redlands, hearing much school news and asking many questions, in especial about the prospects of the big hockey match, Redlands v. Lincolnshire Ladies, which was always played towards the end of October.

"It's to be at Deeping Royal this year," Gabrielle said. "It was the Lincs Ladies' turn to choose, you see."

"Selfish pigs, they might have chosen somewhere nearer. Nine miles off; why, hardly any of us will be able to go and look on," grumbled Noreen.

"I think you will find that a certain number will go by train," Miss Craigie said in her quiet way. "You ought to be a poet, Noreen—you do love to magnify a grievance,"

Noreen joined in the laugh against herself; she was always ready to do that.

"Well, I don't magnify the Stinks Professor, anyway, Miss Craigie; he has grown into such an ill-tempered beast, hasn't he, Gabby?"

Miss Craigie shook her head. "Unparliamentary language, Noreen; stop it, please."

Noreen stopped quite meekly—rather to Joey's disappointment. She would have liked to consult Miss Craigie about the Professor and his ways; however, if he wasn't to be talked about there was an end of it. She asked instead where Deeping Royal was.

"Away beyond the big reservoir—much nearer the Fossdyke Wash than we are," Noreen explained. "Gorgeous fields, if it's fine—but—when it's wet—Help! I wish they would play us at Redlands—we're always all right."

"And who will be allowed to go besides the Team?" Joey next asked anxiously.

"Oh, when we play outside and have to drive or go by train, each member of the Team can take a friend, and the Heads of the Upper and Lower School can take two. You'll take us, won't you, Gabrielle?" Noreen demanded breathlessly.

Joey gasped at the audacity of this suggestion, but Gabrielle answered composedly.

"You were the two I meant to ask, *of course*."

Joey walked the rest of the way back treading on air, and refrained from swanking aggressively to either Gabrielle or Noreen when Miss Craigie invited her to come and help unpack after tea.

Afterwards, when several very big things had happened, she looked back on that blissful afternoon, and saw the result of that threefold friendship.

CHAPTER XIV

"THE PLAY'S THE THING"

I THINK we ought to do something to celebrate Miss Craigie's return," remarked Noreen.

They were dressing for supper in Blue Dorm, Joey, Barbara, Syb, and Noreen; and as usual they were dressing in a hurry.

"What sort of thing?" Joey demanded, trying to disentangle hooks from her hair.

"Something to show we're jolly pleased she's come back. Just think, she might have died of that loathly 'flu'; lots of people have."

"Shut it, you old ghoul," ordered Barbara; "she's all right again now, thank goodness!"

"And we ought to celebrate her all-rightness," Noreen said triumphantly.

"Violets?" suggested Joey.

"Silly cuckoo, how are we to get them?"

"What *do* you want, Noreen?" Syb asked impatiently.

"How about charades after supper—and ask her to come and see them?"

"Frightfully short time to think of anything

decent," objected Syb; "besides, Miss Craigie won't want to leave her dear Miss Lambton, you bet."

"Let's ask her too."

"That doesn't give us a decent charade."

"Can't we think of something?"

"Not something good enough."

"P'r'aps you'd like to do some scenes from *Hamlet*, if you want to be so very high-class," Noreen suggested scornfully. Remove II. B were taking *Hamlet* in literature, and Noreen and the Literature Mistress were usually at loggerheads.

It was that suggestion which gave Joey her idea. "I say," she burst out, "why shouldn't we do a charade on the lines of Hamlet's player-people? You know—where the poison was poured into the poor chap's ear—and ask all the Staff to come, and see whether the Professor looks guilty and shrieks, 'Lights!' because he's doing something evil with his stinks, as Noreen says, or just has a war-strain appearance. It needn't be a noisy charade to upset him if it's just strain."

Noreen thumped Joey on the back. "Topping plan! What word shall we have?"

"German?" suggested Joey. "The first syllable could be Germ, you know—those things Matron is always fussing about——"

"Or the Huns putting them into wells," Barbara interrupted in great excitement.

"What about 'an'?" asked Syb.

"Couldn't she be a German girl, called Anne, Anna really, who is pretending to be a schoolgirl, and really plotting and spying?" Joey said.

"My word, Joey, you're coming on. I'm less surprised you got the scholarship," Noreen cried. "We—Gabrielle and Joey and I—settled this afternoon that someone ought to look into the matter of the Professor's hatefulness, and it's us that are going to," she added cheerfully and ungrammatically, for the benefit of Syb and Barbara. "If he's all right our charade won't hurt him—he'll like it; if he's not . . ."

The gong sounded.

"Soufflez! Regardez glissant, mes enfants," Noreen cried, tying her hair-ribbon with desperate speed. "We must fix up our charade after supper; and look here! we must get some of the others to perform first, while we're fixing it. Ingrid might recite,—she's awfully good,—and we'll get Gabrielle to fiddle. Joey, you'd better do the asking Miss Craigie—oh, and of course you'll have to go to the Head first, as we want all the Staff. Point out it's an occasion."

"Oh, I say, won't one of you?" asked poor Joey; but Noreen was adamant.

"You're rather in favour with the Head, I believe, and anyhow you've swanked enough about Miss Craigie. It's clearly your duty to get leave for the show. We'll do the rest."

"All right," Joey agreed resignedly, and then the inhabitants of Blue Dorm tore downstairs at a record pace, only just escaping an order mark for lateness by the skin of their teeth.

Miss Conyngham received Joey's request very graciously, and promised to invite the Staff to witness the performance and bring them with her to Queen's Hall in half an hour's time. Joey flew back, very satisfied to find Noreen, Barbara, and Sybil in one of the small classrooms, opening from the Hall, distractedly considering the all-important charade. But they were cheerful too, for it appeared that Ingrid had consented to recite, and Gabrielle and the musical genius of Remove II., Clare Estcome, to play.

"We'll put the play last," Noreen said impressively, "and we four will do it, and say nothing to anybody else. Joey, just tell some of these juniors who are doing nothing to arrange the chairs for a show and pull the curtains across the platform; and then we can get on to our job. You're sure the Professor is coming?"

"Miss Conyngham laughed frightfully nicely and said she was sure all the Staff would be de-

lighted, and she thought it a topping idea," Joey said; and on that the four got to work in earnest.

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Miss Conyngham gave gracious permission for the two forms below Remove II. to sit up for the performance, so a large audience was already assembled when the staff of Redlands swept into the Queen's Hall—Miss Conyngham with her arm through Miss Craigie's—to place themselves in the "stalls" specially retained for them. Joey, watching through a chink in the curtains shutting off the platform, was delighted to see that the Professor sat upon the other side of Miss Conyngham. He looked placid and pleased enough now, so far as his large, pallid face could be said to show any expression at all. The audience was further swelled by the servants, indoor and out, even including two or three men who were repairing pipes.

The performance began with Gabrielle's newest violin-piece—a nocturne, executed very correctly but rather nervously. The school applauded vigorously, as they would have applauded anything from the popular Heads of the Upper or Lower School. Ingrid followed, jarringly dramatic in Noyes' *Highwayman*, and was violently appreciated. Clare, not having to face her audience, the piano being sideways to the stage, gave the most successful performance

of the three, but took a strictly secondary place in the way of applause.

Then, after some whispering and stifled giggling, Joey was pushed forward to the front of the stage, and the curtain drawn back a chink. She spoke through it.

“I have to announce that the forthcoming charade is in two syllables and three scenes. The third is the complete word.”

She withdrew, and all the juniors started thinking aloud of two-syllabled words. They were quite audible on the stage, where Barbara, spectacled and padded as to body, was bending over a steaming fish-kettle, prodding it nervously. “I thought if you *boiled* germs you killed them,” she whispered. “This seems so jolly like the witches in *Macbeth*.”

“Go on, you silly ass,” urged Noreen. “It looks all right anyhow, and you’ve got the photographs for growing the germs on. Come on, Joey, I must tie you up.”

Joey, attired in a plaid going-out frock belonging to one of the little ones, to represent a kilt, a khaki sports coat, buttoned across, and two box straps for a Sam-Browne belt, was forthwith lashed brutally to a curtain pole, and ordered not to so much as breathe for fear she should move it and it should become plain to the

audience that it was leaning against her and she could have walked off with it quite easily.

Syb, also rather sketchy as to uniform, but with an unmistakable German cap to make her nationality clear, stood by with a home-made bayonet of stupendous size. Noreen, pillowy as to figure and checked as to blouse, and with her curly, dark hair tightly strained off her forehead, hovered near the Professor, with a large wooden spoon, whether to stir soup or germs seemed doubtful. She waved this spoon impressively, and sent a thrilling whisper to the side of "Draw the curtains."

The curtains jerked back, and after a pause to allow of sufficient thrill upon the part of the audience, Noreen inquired sepulchrally:

"Mein fater, *is* the mixture slab and strong?"

"As strong as thy soup on Sundays, my daughter," was the reply. "As strong as the accursed British Army thinks it is——"

"And proves it is," remarked the dauntless captive at the curtain pole, and **was** promptly prodded with the bayonet to induce a respectful silence.

The Professor, in very good English, with an occasional lapse into a German word, and a masterly repetition of "Tod und Teufel!" at regular intervals, proceeded to explain to his intelligent daughter (who stirred soup over a stove at the



"MEIN FATER, IS THE MIXTURE SLAB AND STRONG?"

back of the stage, between times to add realism) that he was engaged in growing germs of a horrible disease which was to go as far as possible towards exterminating the “accursed Englanders,” and that when he had, so to speak, bottled them, she was to take them to England and cast them into all receptacles of drinking water throughout the kingdom. To avert suspicion she was to let her hair down, attire herself in a djibbah, and assume the character of an English schoolgirl. The fair Anna delightedly accepted the commission, and retired from the stage to change the checked blouse, and the Professor ladled out presumably spoonfuls of germ on to the photographic slides, while informing the English prisoner that his accursed race would soon be non-existent. The Englishman, returning an undaunted reply, was again prodded violently, and Anna returning in a djibbah and looking marvellously thinner, passed him with the taunting gibe that she would pass anywhere as an English girl, and he was powerless to save his country, and marched out *en route* for England, carrying a dispatch case full of bottled germs.

The Professor and the guard thereupon sat down to drink “Confusion to perfidious England,” which they did with great gusto and succumbed to the force of brandy neat (they stated it was that) with much speed. As soon as they

had their heads down on a table, which shook with their snores, the English prisoner set to work to free himself, and succeeded in doing so just as the curtains were drawn in obedience to frenzied whispers from Noreen from behind. Joey laid down her curtain pole, and flew to the chink, regardless of the flattering applause that was greeting the first scene of this thrilling drama.

“What is the Professor looking like, Noreen?”

“He’s clapping quite a lot,” Noreen explained, in a gusty whisper; and Joey, peering over her shoulder at the large, pallid face and the black moustache, saw that Noreen was quite right. The Professor was clapping as vigorously as Miss Craigie herself.

“It must be war-strain,” said Joey, and they rang up the curtain on Scene II., which showed Anna or Anne in her dormitory at a girls’ school, which appeared to consist in one other girl only and a superannuated mistress (Syb), whose aggressive spectacles did not seem much to assist her defective sight. She tottered up to say good-night to her pupils, calling Barbara out with her to unhook her dress, which opportunity was seized upon by Anna to mention in a brief soliloquy, that she was only waiting till her room-mate was asleep to steal out and introduce her father’s germs (alternately alluded to as “flu-bugs” and

“bubonic plague”) into the neighbouring reservoir, this proceeding being the prelude to the abrupt departure of “Anne” from the English pig-dog boarding-school for good.

Barbara returned on the enunciation of this sentiment, and after a brief conversation with the obviously unsympathetic Anne about her brother—a prisoner in Germany—the two girls lay down in their dressing-gowns upon a sofa that was rather a tight fit for one, and fell instantly into sound stage slumber.

After a thrilling moment of silence, Anne rose up, lit a candle, held it close to the eyes of the slumbering Barbara, and remarking, “She sleeps, the English pig-dog. Ach Himmel! Now can I do what I will,” she seized the Horlick’s Malted Milk bottle, large size, which contained the germs, and stole out. She had hardly closed the door when Barbara sat up, crying, “Am I dreaming, or did she say pig-dog? If so, she is no English Anne, but a German spy among us. And what has she gone to do?”

The question was answered by a call from beneath the window at the back of the stage, and Barbara, dashing to it, called, “Jock! It’s never you! Come up; I’m alone.”

Joey, hoisted from below by Ingrid, appeared at the open window, with, triumph of realism,

her hair and clothes wet, for it was raining; struggled through, with much display of thin legs, and said dramatically, "Has she loosed her bugs?"

The explanation that followed was a triumph of brevity, and brother and sister dashed out to try and cut Anne off before she reached the reservoir. The curtain fell, amid tumultuous applause, and a jovial request from Professor Trouville that they would be "vary careful not to drop the bottle and let zose fierce animals loose upon us."

The third scene required no preparation, and was brief indeed. The aged Head Mistress discovered asking frantically, of no one in particular, what can have happened to her pupils; to her enter Joey and Barbara, dragging between them Anne, defiant, and with the germ bottle torn from her hand—unopened.

The Highland officer explained the situation in two sentences, and Anne, in a superior German accent, mentioned that from her point of view to torture prisoners and let loose disease upon women and children were right and proper—because she was—Hoch! Hoch! a German!

Curtain, amid thunders of applause.

The four came down into the hall to be congratulated. Miss Conyngham paid a stately

compliment to the acting; Miss Craigie, with a grave face, rather belied by her twinkling eyes, admired the chemistry; even Ingrid remarked condescendingly, "Not half bad for kids."

Joey, standing in the midst of a congratulatory group of Remove II. B girls, felt a touch on her arm, and, turning, found herself face to face with the Professor. He was smiling quite pleasantly.

"A clefare and entertaining little play, Mees Jocelyn Graham," he said. "And it is you that plan it, is it not? My congratulations."

"Oh, thanks awfully; but it wasn't me really—we all four did it," Joey began, in some confusion, when Noreen caught what she said, and interrupted.

"Don't listen to her, Professor Trouville; she planned it really; and it was jolly brainy of her, wasn't it?"

The Professor smiled, his curious, sphinx-like smile.

"I thank you, Mees Noreen. I thought that I congratulate the right one, but your friend of the scholarship is modest, *n'est ce pas?*"

"Really the old chap was quite human for once, wasn't he?" Noreen remarked, as the four went up to Blue Dorm a few minutes later. "I hope Gabrielle went for him about the babes while he was in this yielding mood. She won't

get her nose snapped off quite so close to her face."

But Joey didn't answer; she was wondering why it was that she had found the Professor's pleasantness so singularly unpleasant.

CHAPTER XV

THE COURT-MARTIAL

JOEY couldn't go to sleep that night. She was excited, and all kinds of thoughts went whirling round and round in her head, making sleep impossible.

The whole day had been exciting—the play had only been the culmination of it all. The walk to the station—the conversation about Professor Trouville and his queerness; on top of that the thrill of being coupled with Noreen in Gabrielle's invitation to the great match; the long talk about home-things with Miss Craigie in her bedroom; and then the play.

It was this last, probably, that turned her thoughts so much to Father, dying far away from them all, among his enemies.

The man who had been Father's special friend among the prisoners had come to see Mums, when the Armistice released those of our men who had survived the German treatment, and had told her that Father was taken from the prison camp in a dying state, and word had come back a few days later that he was dead.

Captain Verney had done his very best, delaying his own return, to find out for Mums just how he died and where he had been buried, but it seemed that no one knew or cared; and Uncle Staff had had no better luck when he went out with a War-Office permit to investigate a few weeks later. Mums and the children had just the one consolation of knowing that Father died for England just as surely as though he had been shot going over the top, to help them bear the thought of the long weeks of suffering and ill-usage which had come first. If only escaping from prison were as easy as it seemed in books and plays, Joey thought, tossing restlessly, she and Gavin would have been out in Germany with a file and a bottle of chloroform, and have set Father free before the Huns had time to kill him. But in real life you could do nothing except wait and wait and say your prayers, and take care of Mums.

Joey sat up in bed, and stared out at the dark window-pane so close to her. It was a mild, damp night—she threw off her quilt—perhaps she was too hot and that was the reason that she could not sleep. And while she was sitting up, she saw something flash in the darkness, and knew in a second what it was. A series of short blue flashes, coming from the dark.

“How funny!” was her first thought, and then

she suddenly called to mind John's signalling instructions; that was the "call-up" in Morse. Somebody, it seemed, was going to practise his signalling now, at nearly twelve at night. Joey crept out of bed, and crouched on the window-sill so as to miss nothing.

There was disappointingly little to see; the people, whoever they were, were not nearly such keen signallers as John was. Something came from the side of the house—from her window Joey couldn't locate it exactly—three long flashes and two short ones. Then, a minute later, from the distance—one of the letters she had used with John—short, long, long, long, and then a short-long.

And that was all.

Joey sat crouched on the window-sill for quite a long time, but nothing more happened. Then, just as she was thinking of getting back to bed, someone came round the corner of the house far below. It was the Professor. She saw him unmistakably in the light of an electric torch, which he must have pressed for an instant, perhaps to show him the path. He slept, as Joey knew, in a room on the ground floor of the lodge; he had chosen it because he so often worked late at the Lab and did not want to disturb the lodge-keeper and his wife.

She wondered whether it was he who had been

signalling; somehow you would not expect an ill-tempered chemistry professor to want to practise signalling, especially about twelve o'clock at night.

Of course, German spies used to signal in war-time, but then the Professor wasn't German: his name was French, and the look of him was more French than German, and he spoke with a French accent, and, most important proof of all, he had laughed and been quite genial about the play, instead of giving himself away as Hamlet's uncle had done. Besides, English people had settled they wouldn't have Huns creeping in among them again, and though Colonel Sturt had seemed to think they might be doing it, Cousin Greta had not agreed with him.

Joey set to work to see if she could remember the signalling; if the Professor were really keen on it, and went on being in the pleasant temper he had shown to-night, perhaps she might ask him some questions.

Dash, dash, dash, dot, dot. She went through the alphabet; there were no letters like that; then it must be a numeral. John had taught those as well. The long numerals were the ones he had insisted on, because he thought it made things so slow to have to signal f—i—before you sent a numeral.

Dot, dot, dot, dash, dash—Joey had it: it

was three. And immediately after it—a pause between—dot, dash, dash, dash, dash—31. Thirty-one. That had been all. The other signal had been an answer, and that was a good deal more puzzling. For surely dot, dash, dash, dash, stood for J and dot-dash for A, and yet *Ja* had no sense. Joey supposed she must have forgotten the alphabet, and went to sleep at last, trying to remember.

The play influenced her dreams more strongly than the signalling. It acted itself again through her sleep, only it refused to act itself straightforwardly. Everything and everyone seemed to stick and repeat, including Noreen—so ready of tongue. Her German, which Joey, who had never learnt any, had so admired last night, had quite deserted her; the only word she seemed able to make use of was *Ja*. No “*Tod und Teufels*.” No “*Ach Himmels*.” She said, “*Ja! ja!*” and that was all, and then the dressing-bell sounded, and Clara the housemaid came in with a clatter of cans, and it was morning.

Joey was sleepy, and did not get up till the last possible minute; and then it meant a frantic scramble to get dressed in time, and no chance of talking to the others.

As it was, she was just a moment late, but grace had not yet been said, for the girls were still standing round the tables, so she hoped to

escape the order mark which was her due. She slid noiselessly into her place, and then became aware that Miss Conyngham was speaking—Miss Conyngham, who never appeared at breakfast, but had it in a stately manner, befitting Head Mistresses, in her own room. She was standing at the top of the long centre table, where Ingrid and other great seniors sat, and there was a little line drawn between her eyebrows, as though she were worried. She was evidently in the middle of a sentence. Joey listened, trying to make out what it was all about.

“ . . . And when Professor Trouville went to the Lab before breakfast this morning somebody had been there, breaking bottles, mixing specimens, and doing other acts of altogether stupid and unreasonable mischief. The door was as usual locked; the girl, whoever she was, had got in at the window by the steps, which Professor Trouville had for once left open. That being so, I quite exonerate the juniors; no girl under thirteen could scramble up to that window. Professor Trouville tells me that he has had trouble with several of the girls in Remove II. B; if any girl there has done this wrong and foolish thing, it is up to her to own it now—for the honour of a school which does not turn out cowards.”

There was a thrilling pause, while Miss Con-

yngham's far-seeing eyes looked round expectantly, and the Professor stood just behind her, silent, watchful, impassive, with half-closed lids. Miss Conyngham seemed to have no doubt that somebody was going to speak—a little of the colour faded from her face and the light from her eyes, when there came only silence.

"I trust the girl who has done this thing to tell us now," she said.

And still there was silence.

Miss Conyngham's face grew a little stern. "If any girl here knows anything of the matter, though not herself responsible, I wish her to speak out."

Still silence. The Professor whispered something to Miss Conyngham; she shook her head, then spoke to the senior mistress present:

"Breakfast had better go on now, Miss Wres-tow; I will deal with this matter later."

She went out, followed by the Professor.

"What on earth is the matter?" Joey whispered, squeezing hastily into a place by Noreen: "Something happened to the Lab—what luck for you stinks people! You won't be able to do any."

Noreen was rather cross. "Don't be such a young silly; don't you see this is going to be a horrid plague for us? That old beast has put the Head on to Remove II. B just because he

doesn't like me, I believe, and of course we're suspected. You heard what Miss Conyngham said."

"But who's done what?"

"Somebody's got in and smashed some of his hateful old things there; *I* should think the cat as likely as not; but of course he fastens it on to us. Just like him. As if I'd go and do a silly kid's trick like that!"

"Of course you wouldn't. It's a shame," comforted Joey. "But of course the Head would never think so. S'pose she just had to ask. When does he think we did it?"

"Last night. He thought we were excited about the play and aiming it at him, and somebody went in and did it after we were supposed to be in bed."

"But he was there himself much later than that," almost shouted Joey. "I saw him out of my window."

"Well, he *is* the limit, then. Let's tell Gabby that."

The information was passed up to Gabrielle at the other end of the table; she came round to the other two the minute breakfast was over.

"What's this, Joey?"

Joey began upon the story of last night, but hadn't got far in it before Ingrid Latimer bore down upon the group. "Joey Graham, where

are you? You are to go to Miss Conyngham at once. She told me so before she went."

"Oh, bother! Just when you were telling us," Noreen broke out. "Cut along, and do hurry. I shall burst if I don't know the rest before First Lesson."

Joey ran, arriving at Miss Conyngham's door in a decidedly breathless condition.

Miss Conyngham was there with the Professor. He was speaking, but stopped as Joey came in. Joey had an idea that behind his pale, impassive face he was very angry.

"Jocelyn," said Miss Conyngham gravely, "I want to ask you one or two questions by yourself."

"Yes, Miss Conyngham," Joey answered wonderingly.

"Have you gone outside at night? Think before you speak."

That question did not need thinking about; Joey remembered that home-sick first night far too vividly to hesitate. "Yes, Miss Conyngham."

"When?"

"The first night I was here. I got out on the roof; didn't Matron tell you I spoilt my quilt? She jolly well takes care to go on telling me——"

"Answer only my questions, please. You got out on the roof that first night. For what reason?"

Joey could not say that Noreen, Syb, and Barbara had been horrid to her; she turned red and hesitated. The Professor glanced quickly at Miss Conyngham.

"For what reason, Jocelyn?"

"Oh, just I wanted to. Of course, I didn't know it was going to rain on my quilt."

"Never mind the quilt. How often have you done it since?"

"Never, Miss Conyngham."

The Professor's black eyebrows lifted just a shade. Joey saw them and felt angry. Didn't he believe her?

"You are quite sure of that, Jocelyn?"

"Yes—honour."

"Last night," Miss Conyngham said slowly, her eyes on Joey's face, "the Professor saw a girl, a tall, slim girl in a short frock, climb in at the window of the Laboratory sometime after you were all supposed to be in bed, but before the servants had locked up. He was not near enough to be quite sure about her—but this morning he found this handkerchief under the window."

She held out the handkerchief—a small blue-bordered one, rather grubby. Joey's name, in Mums' marking-ink, stared up at her from one corner. It was certainly hers—it was, in fact, the handkerchief she had used last night; she remembered drying her hands with it after helping Bar-

bara to carry the cauldron of boiling water across the stage. She had thrust it back into her sleeve, she remembered, when Noreen demanded she should tell the audience how many syllables the charade had.

"Yes; it's mine all right—but I don't know how it got there," she said, staring at it.

"Is there anything that you would like to say to me quite alone?" Miss Conyngham asked her.

"You don't think I went to the Lab when I've said I didn't? I don't tell lies," Joey flared.

"No, I believe your word of honour, Jocelyn," Miss Conyngham said, and she looked very straight at the Professor.

Joey heaved a sigh of relief. "Well, that's all right. Thanks awfully. Do you want me any more, Miss Conyngham, or can I go now? For Noreen and Gabby are frightfully keen to hear about the things I saw last night."

She turned to the Professor. "I say, were you walking round the place all the time between ten and twelve? You must have got wet! If it had been one of us, we'd have caught it from Matron for staying out in the rain."

"What do you talk of? I picked up the handkerchief, suspecting not-ting, and returned to the Lodge," the Professor said annihilatingly. "It was not till I visit the Laboratory to make a leetle experiment this morning, that I find my

eyes haf not deceive me—and then I looked at the name on the handkerchief, and learn who do me this injury.”

“I’ve told Miss Conyngham I didn’t go into the Lab,” Joey declared, growing angry in her turn. “I haven’t been near the place since you were so frightfully cross with me for tidying the day I came. And you needn’t be surprised that I thought you were walking about all that time, for you were there at twelve, when you were signalling. I saw you. I dare say you came back to do it—only, it was a natural thing for me to think, wasn’t it?—not rudeness, like doubting a person’s word. I’m sorry if *I’ve* been rude, though; and I think you signal splendidly—so jolly fast. I couldn’t keep up with you.”

The Professor made a contemptuous gesture with his hands, stained and blunted at the fingertips.

“She dreams, this child. I haf no knowledge of the signalling. But for the other matter, Madame, may I ask that you will question further?”

“No, Professor, I shall not do that,” Miss Conyngham said firmly. “Jocelyn has given me her word of honour that she had no hand in the matter, and I trust my girls. Someone else must have taken her handkerchief by accident. I need hardly tell you that I shall look most

carefully into the business and discover the culprit; but I cannot act as you suggest, or disbelieve the word of a child who has always shown herself truthful. Jocelyn, you may go; I am satisfied with what you have told me; but until the mystery is cleared up there will be no leave out for any Redlands girl, and you may tell the girls so."

"Not for the match?" cried Joey, in dismay.

"Not for the match; except, of course, for the players," Miss Conyngham said quite decidedly. "Someone is behaving like a dishonourable coward, and until she owns up the whole school must be punished. That will do, Jocelyn."

The Professor made a quick step towards Miss Conyngham. His expression made Joey think of the day he had found her trying to perform the duties of a "scholarship kid."

"If the word of the young lady is to be taken before mine, Miss Conyngham, I must ask you of your goodness to seek another Professor of Chemistry," he said. "And it would be much to my convenience if you could find him by the end of this vairy month, since your young ladies here haf no desire to learn of me—and I therefore receive insults on all sides. . . ."

"Run away, Jocelyn," Miss Conyngham ordered, and Joey obeyed of course, though it was a tantalising moment to be ordered out. Would

Miss Conyngham and the Professor make friends again, she wondered, or would she accept his resignation and let him leave them as he asked to do by the end of the month?

The end of the month—why, that would be the 31st, of course. Joey thought of Noreen's words, "We're living in a mystery." Noreen had been joking, but it began to look as though her joking words were coming true.

It was then it occurred to her that the minute the ban on going out was removed, the person to consult was John. But meantime the school was under arrest and the culprit had still to be found. Joey made her way back to the others, and announced Miss Conyngham's depressing ultimatum on the way to Remove II. B classroom. By Break the whole school knew it, and the Head of the Upper School and the Head of the Lower met for a council of war.

CHAPTER XVI

THE EVE OF THE MATCH

IT was the thirtieth of October, the eve of the great match between the "Lines Ladies" and Redlands.

Ordinarily all Redlands would have been in a perfect fizzle of excitement; the Team was strong, the best, so Miss Lambton and the coach agreed, that Redlands had run for the past six years; and the weather was perfect, fine and dry and windy, so that the field at Deeping Royal was safe to be in the best of all possible conditions for the match.

But despite all this, gloom reigned throughout Redlands, from Ingrid down to little Tiddles; who, although she could not understand the issues, could at least understand that her adored Joey was sad.

Miss Conyngham had not budged one inch from her pronouncement, in spite of all that the College dared to urge. The Professor had seen a girl climbing in at the window of the Lab, and yet no girl had come forward to own to it. Until the culprit gave herself up voluntarily, the whole

school must be under punishment. And the punishment was "gating" at all times except the walks in "croc." That meant that no Redlands girl, with the exception of the Team, who naturally must be exempt, could go to the great match.

The College groaned and conjectured and groaned again. It gave Miss Conyngham up as a bad job; gentle though she was, she was harder to move than "Maddy" with her austere manner, or Miss Wrestow, the senior mistress, with her strict views on discipline. It tackled understanding people, like Miss Craigie and Miss Lambton, and implored intervention. But nothing made any difference; Miss Conyngham had given her ultimatum, and by that the school had to abide. Until the culprit gave herself up, the whole of Redlands was under the ban.

Joey sometimes wondered if she were still suspected, in spite of her emphatic denial and Miss Conyngham's apparent acceptance of it. She knew that the Professor had suspected her; Ingrid had been sure that he whispered her name to Miss Conyngham when she came in late on that dreadful morning, and the look in his eyes had been so vindictive, Ingrid said, that he must have really wanted to get her severely punished, perhaps even sent away. Ingrid had been very indignant about it, and championed Joey so pub-

licly that no one in the College would have dared to doubt her.

Besides at first everyone was sure that the clearing up of the mystery was only a matter of a few hours, or, at the most, a few days. Ingrid called a meeting of the Upper School; Gabrielle of the Lower. Both pointed out with proper Head-Girl firmness that the offender was bound in honour to come forward—and no one did! And that second half of October went slipping away, with the College still under its ban and the mystery unsolved.

The suspense began to get upon everybody's nerves, and excitable people started to cast accusations about, more or less wildly. It did no good, and only wore still thinner the already thin patience of the girls. And the thirtieth came, and still the criminal was undiscovered and the College paying in bitterness of spirit for her silence.

Joey was trying to forget the trouble in the kindergarten with the babies. They, in especial little Tiddles, were always so proud and pleased to have her there that she snatched half an hour with them whenever she could manage it, despite the remonstrances of Noreen, Syb, and Barbara, who thought her tastes eccentric and "not the thing" for Remove II. B.

Of course they could not be expected to realise

that Joey missed Kirsty and Bingo quite badly sometimes, for the public attitude of Redlands towards juniors at one's home was studiously detached. Syb wrote to her small sister every week, Joey knew, and sent her a present costing three weeks' pocket-money on her birthday, but when asked about her didn't know whether she was nine or ten, and could only state vaguely that she "believed it wasn't a bad sort of kid."

So Joey refrained from saying too much about Kirsty and Bingo, but stuck firmly to her friendship with the kindergarten people all the same.

When Noreen burst into the kindergarten play-room during the half-hour between tea and prep, Joey only thought her friend had come to drag her away, and went on defiantly with "Oranges and Lemons."

But instead of the good-natured jeer which she expected, Noreen spoke quite hoarsely:

"Come along, Joey; I want you."

Joey looked at her. Noreen was very white, and her blue eyes were blazing. Clearly something was very wrong.

"I want you," she repeated. "Do leave the babies and come along."

There was an expostulatory wail from the little ones. Joey turned round and hugged Tiddles, who was nearest to her, clinging to her djibbah in readiness for the tug of war.

"I can't stop now, darling; but I'll tell you what, I'll come after tea to-morrow, as we can't go to the match."

Tiddles released her unwillingly, and Noreen seized her arm and dragged her off at once.

"What *is* the matter?" Joey asked, as soon as they were outside the room and out of hearing of the babies.

Noreen gave a short laugh.

"You'll never guess. It is about the limit. Here have Doris Redburn and Roma Kirke been insinuating that it was *I* who broke into the Lab."

"What? You!" gasped Joey.

"They said I was always grouching about stinks and saying how I hated the Professor—of course, that's a true bill. And they said I didn't care what rows I got into. That's a true bill as well. I don't care. I rather wish I had done that Lab business—only Gabrielle is so stuffy about things like that—but if I had, I simply *couldn't* hold my tongue and have the whole Coll punished, even if telling meant getting expelled."

"Of course you couldn't," Joey burst out, furious for her friend. "Who are saying it—Doris and Roma? I'll just go and tell them what I think about their hateful untruthful cheek. . . ."

"No, stop!" Noreen cried, catching her arm as she whirled by. "It's no good just going

for those two—they say lots of girls think it. Wonder if Miss Conyngham does too?”

“’Course not!” said Joey hotly. “She’d jolly well know you couldn’t be a mean outsider, whatever else you might be. But I do wish the Professor hadn’t gone and stirred her up like this. If he hadn’t been so cock-sure he saw a girl, it might have been supposed to be the cat.”

Noreen groaned.

“It’s pretty beastly anyway. One of our crowd is behaving like a rotten outsider, and her rotten outsiderishness is being fastened upon me. It is rough luck.”

Joey had never seen her cheerful and inconsequent friend half so “down”; she was dreadfully distressed.

“Let me just go for that Doris girl—she’s much the worst,” she suggested.

“What’s the good?” asked Noreen dejectedly.

She put her arm through Joey’s, and they began to walk up and down the broad gravel path between the house and the Lab.

“Why on earth couldn’t the Professor go to bed and stay there, instead of messing round and spoiling the hockey-match for us all? I’m jolly glad he’s leaving at the end of the month,” she concluded vindictively; “but he’s done the harm by now.”

“If only he hadn’t been so sure about the

girl," Joey repeated, frowning. "It's that makes Miss Conyngham so stiff about it—otherwise she'd just take our words."

"I think she ought to, anyway. Just think of the match, and Redlands perhaps pulling it off for the first time for six years, and not one of us there!"

"P'r'aps the girl will own up in time," Joey suggested, but not hopefully.

Noreen shook her head.

"Not she. She would have done it long ago if she meant to. She's probably a beastly slacker, who doesn't care two pins about hockey. . . ."

"Nor the Coll," Joey added gloomily.

"I've a good mind to go to the match after all—are you game, Joey?" Noreen said suddenly. "Oh yes, I know there'll be the father and mother, not to mention the aunts and uncles of a good old row; but one may just as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. If they're going to suspect me of beastly things like this——"

Noreen was driven rather desperate; that was clear. Joey held on tighter to her arm, as though she expected her to bolt off there and then.

"It would be heavenly, Noreen; but we can't—you know we can't. Besides, everyone's dying to go."

"If I could get hold of that skunk of a girl!" growled Noreen, and then her eyes lit up again

with a dangerous gleam. "Tell you what, Joey; I've a precious good mind to say I did do it after all; and then the others will be allowed to go anyway."

"Noreen!" gasped Joey.

"Oh, of course. I shall tell Miss Conyngham that I didn't—afterwards—when it's too late to matter. You're right about the other thing; it would be rather skunkish when everyone is dying to go. But I'd give them the chance this way. Oh, I know it's an awful thumper, but they shouldn't put it into my head by hinting that I did the crime and lay low."

"No one would believe you did it," Joey urged, grasping at a straw. "No one to count, at least—who cares for silly idiots like Doris and Roma?"

"Wouldn't they? I've got a truly Irish reputation here."

"Well, no one could believe you wouldn't tell for a whole fortnight when everyone was being punished, anyway."

"Doris and Roma hinted that quite a lot of people found it easy enough to believe," Noreen said bitterly. "No, shut it, Joey; I've settled, I'm going to do it. You ought to be pleased; you'll be able to go to your cousin's again—didn't you say they'd asked you for Sunday?"

"Don't be a pig, Noreen!"

"Pax, old thing, I didn't mean it. Of course, you won't like my doing it, I know; but it *is* a way out. Get Gabrielle to take Syb for her other friend if she will; Syb's wild to go. . . ."

"Noreen, will you promise, honour! not to go telling Miss Conyngham you were the one till after Prep at least?" poor Joey urged in desperation. "Oh, do promise, Noreen."

"What's the good of waiting, you cuckoo?"

"Oh, the real girl might speak—or I might find a way out."

"The cheek of you! Because you got a scholarship, you think . . ."

"Oh, talk sense, Noreen; of course I don't. Only I might find a way. Promise!"

"Righto. Till after Prep, then, but not a minute longer. Understand."

Noreen disengaged her arm, and departed hastily. Joey stood still considering. Everything that was in her revolted against Noreen's plan; and yet what was there to do? Even her inherent hopefulness found it hard to believe that the culprit would come forward at this eleventh hour, and if she didn't—the guests of the Team were all held up for the match, and the gating of the whole College might go on for an indefinite period—possibly even to the end of the term.

Joey had herself already realised the practical drawbacks of the punishment: she had received

a particularly kind letter from Cousin Greta asking her for the day next Sunday, and Miss Conyngham had said, "Write and decline."

Of course it was nothing in comparison with the match; still, now Cousin Greta had been so nice and understanding about her reprehensible proceedings on the former visit, she would have quite liked to go again. Besides, she wanted to ask John about the Professor's signalling. And yet to allow Noreen to tell a lie and accuse herself of an act of unforgivable meanness—that couldn't be right.

Joey looked up at the Lab; if only the Professor had not been so wide awake that night! She supposed he was quite sure of what he saw; after all, it was a very dark night. And then there came to Joey the bold thought of going to ask the Professor if he were really quite sure. He was in the Lab; she could see his head moving between wall and window, and there would be just time before the bell rang for Prep. Joey made one dart for the steps, and hammered at the door.

"Please, it's not anyone come to worry you when you're busy," she called out. "I'm Joey Graham, and I want to ask something dreadfully important, but it will only take about half a sec."

There were steps inside the Lab; a key turned,

the door opened. The Professor stood there before her, dressed in the long white linen coat he wore when he was working. The violet handkerchief protruded from one pocket.

"May I come in just a moment?" Joey asked humbly. "I want to ask you . . ."

"I am very busy," the Professor told her, in no very promising voice.

"Well, but it's frightfully important," Joey tumbled out in desperate haste for fear he should shut the door in her face. "If I could help you clearing up or anything like that after, to make up for wasting your time now, I would like a shot if you'd let me, but . . ."

"Ah, it is of course the scholarship girl that tink she has the duty to tidy here," said the Professor. His temper seemed to have suddenly improved. "You may come in, and tell me vat it is you vish to say."

Joey came in. Even in that supreme moment she noticed that the Lab looked very much as though it needed tidying. The Professor saw her glance.

"Dere is so much that I must do to make all in readiness for my successor," he said blandly.

"Is he coming at once?" Joey asked.

"In two, tree days after I have left; *I* go away to-morrow, and, *ma foi!* I tink I must be again up 'alf de night to prepare the Lab for

him. So if you tink you see me signalling again . . .”

“I shan’t be startled,” Joey finished for him. “But I wasn’t really before—it’s only Tiddles and babies like that who are frightened of you, and they’re so little, you know; they can’t help it. But I wanted to ask you about that night—it was jolly dark, you know; that’s partly why your signalling was so beautifully plain—do you think you might just possibly have been mistaken . . . about the girl you saw? . . .”

“You tink I make de lie, hein?” the Professor asked.

“Oh *no*, of course not,” Joey assured him in a great hurry. “You’re French, you know, and French people would be just as much the soul of honour as English, *of course*. It’s only Huns who tell lies, one knows. Only it *was* a very dark night, and Redlands girls always have owned up about things before—and it’s so desperate about being stopped from the match and all, you know, that Noreen O’Hara—the one whom you call ‘Fathead’ in Stinks Class—is going to say she did it, though she didn’t, for the sake of the rest and one can’t let her do that, can one?”

“An’ I am to prevent Mees O’Hara from telling de lie—by the vay, it seems it is not only Huns dat do dat after all—by telling Mees Con-

yngham that I consider myself mistake'?" the Professor said slowly.

"Of course not, if you're dead sure about the girl," Joey corrected miserably. "Only, it *was* dark, wasn't it? I was looking out of my window all the time, so I know how dark it was; and if you said *you* weren't quite sure, I know Miss Conyngham would rather believe a Redlands girl wasn't a mean outsider."

The Professor lifted his heavy lids and looked at her.

"You are a good pleader, Mees Joey Graham. So you looked from your bedroom for long and tink it too dark for me to see clear. I will go to Mees Conyngham now—and tell 'er dat I may 'ave been mistake'—on one condition—dat you do as you offer a while back and come to-morrow to 'elp me tidy de Lab. Ees dat a bargain? since I waste my time on preventing your Mees Noreen make de lie."

"Rather!" Joey cried joyfully. "I say, you *are* a good sort, and you shall just see how I'll tidy to-morrow. I suppose you wouldn't like me to bring Gabrielle and Noreen as well? I'm sure they would be most awfully pleased."

"No!" the Professor said sharply. "Bring no one, and tell no one. I do not want children running in and out; they disturb me."

"All right," Joey promised joyfully. "When shall I come?"

"At twelve, when you haf finished lessons, *n'est-ce pas?*" the Professor said, quite pleasantly for him, and Joey, with a heartfelt "Thank you," flew for her classroom at her best speed, arriving late, in company with two or three other laggards.

"Really, Jocelyn Graham, and you, Bernadine and Rhoda, you are too bad," Miss Lambton said indignantly. "Why can't you listen for the bell, instead of coming in late and disturbing us all in this way? Take a Rule, all three of you; and don't let it happen again."

The "Sorry, Miss Lambton," which Joey murmured was conventional entirely. She was not sorry at all, for she had a glorious conviction that the deed was done, and the College cleared.

Bernadine, Rhoda, and herself were kept behind, when Prep was over, to receive a short but stringent lecture from Miss Lambton on the need of punctuality, and so did not go out to dress with the rest. But the attention which Joey was endeavouring to give to Miss Lambton was much interfered with by conjectures, and scattered altogether by a sound that came a minute or two later down to Classroom Remove II. B—a sound of cheering.

Louder it grew and louder, as girls came pouring in from their different classrooms.

“What *can* be happening?” Miss Lambton interrupted herself to ask.

The three sinners took the question for a signal of dismissal. They ran.

A great throng of girls, growing larger every moment, was congregated in the hall, cheering wildly. Squeezing past smaller girls, and under the elbows of seniors, Joey arrived somehow in the front rank.

A large notice faced her—a notice on which the ink was hardly dry:

“In consequence of information received, Miss Conyngham withdraws the ban on Redlands.

CHAPTER XVII

TRICKED

JOEY was up next morning with a punctuality that highly exasperated the other occupants of Blue Dorm. But in the face of so much excitement, she would have found it almost impossible to stay in bed, even if she had not wanted to telephone to Cousin Greta before breakfast, to ask if after all she might go to her on Sunday.

Miss Conyngham had given gracious permission for the use of the 'phone overnight, and if Joey was to be at the Lab at 12, she would not have a minute to spare, most likely, till the match was over. And this was Saturday.

She leaned far out of her window first thing to see if the weather was smiling on the all-important match. It was quite fine and clear, with a sky that looked a long way off slightly flecked with fine mares' tails, and a sea that seemed comparatively near, lying silver grey on the luminous horizon.

"Oh, get back to bed," groaned Noreen, from

half under the bedclothes; but Joey got up, all the same, and dashed downstairs to the 'phone.

The housemaids had just finished with Miss Conyngham's room and were sweeping the hall; Joey shut the door to get away from the dust and noise, and asked for Colonel Sturt's number at the Exchange.

She got it; but it was an unfamiliar voice that answered her:

"Her ladyship is not yet down, and cannot be disturbed."

"Is Miss Grace there?" asked Joey.

"Miss Grace is not yet down."

"Is anybody?" Joey asked, hoping sincerely that she would not be obliged to talk to Colonel Sturt.

"Mr. John is, miss; would you wish to speak to him?"

"Please," Joey said, relieved; and a minute later heard the heavy thump of crutches, and a decorous voice saying, "A young lady to speak to you, sir."

Joey squeezed the receiver vigorously. "That you, John? It's Joey speaking. Can you really walk about now? How topping!"

"Yes, rather—I'm getting along fine with crutches," was John's cheerful answer. "I say, why can't you come on Sunday, young 'un? You'll find Gracie quite different this time. . . ."

"I can come now, if Cousin Greta doesn't mind my changing," Joey explained. "The Coll got gated, and now it's un-gated, that's all; and I'm going to the match at Deeping Royal this afternoon, and I'd like to come over to you to-morrow no end if I may, and tell you about it."

"Righto. I'll tell my aunt. She'll be awfully pleased. You may take it she'll fetch you for lunch. I say, like to do some more signalling?"

"Oh yes, John. Do you know our Stinks Professor here is frightfully good at that? I saw him the other night . . ."

"*What?* Don't you go to bed at night at Redlands?"

"Of course, you stupid. The Professor was doing it at night, not me. I saw him out of my window."

"Signalling practice all by himself in the middle of the night? Tell that to someone younger, my dear Kid."

Joey took no notice of the jeer. "John, isn't dot, dash, dash, dash, J?" she demanded.

"Yes, rather!"

"And dot-dash is A?"

"Of course."

"Then what does Ja spell?"

"All by itself?"

"All by itself."

"It's the German for yes," John told her, after

a second's pause. "But your Stinks man is French, isn't he?"

"Yes; Professor Trouville."

"Was that *all* his signalling you saw?"

"That wasn't his signalling."

"Whose was it?"

"I don't know. It seemed to come from a long way off."

"You said the Professor signalled?"

"Yes; he did first."

"What?"

"It seemed like 31."

"Thirty-one?"

"Yes."

"Funny—that's to-day," John said. "Joey."

"Yes."

"I think you had better come over here; I'll ask Cousin Greta to send for you. Come to-day, I mean, and not wait for to-morrow."

"*John?* I can't to-day—it's the match."

"Well, I'll take you on to it in the car."

"It's frightfully nice of you—but, you see, I was going with Gabby and Noreen, my specialist friends."

"I'll ask Aunt Greta to ask the whole boiling of you to lunch then," John said, impatiently. "So long, Joey. I can't tell you any more till I know it myself. But you come along if you're sent for."

"But, John, I can't come to lunch, because I've promised to tidy the Lab," Joey began, and then stopped, because she had been rung off. She went in to breakfast, feeling very doubtful whether she wanted to go to lunch at Mote to-day, even with the company of Noreen and Gabrielle. It would be much more fun to go with the Team, and it was more than possible that Cousin Greta might not see the great importance of being in time for the match.

Then Miss Conyngham made an announcement at breakfast that made her absolutely sure she did not want to go.

"I am glad to know that it seems possible I suspected a Redlands girl unjustly," Miss Conyngham said in the clear voice that reached without effort to every corner of the big refectory.

"Because I am so glad and thankful that I *was* mistaken, I wish to give the College an especial treat, and therefore arranged last night by 'phone that enough brakes should be here by 1.15 to-day to take the whole six hundred of us to Deeping Royal—to see, we hope, Redlands pull it off against the Lincs Ladies."

Miss Conyngham might have had more to say, but she was not allowed to say it. The whole school rose at her, and the cheering, as Noreen remarked afterwards, nearly smashed all the breakfast-cups on the table. Miss Conyngham

had to hold up her hand twice for silence before she could mention that dinner would be at a quarter to one, promptly, to allow of a punctual start for Deeping Royal.

"How absolutely topping of the Head," Noreen whispered to Joey. "I say, I *am* glad you stopped me making an ass of myself last night. I believe she's just as bucked about it as we are, really. Bags I next place to you, old thing, in our bus."

"I'm not going," Joey explained mournfully.

"Not going?"

"Not with the rest, I mean. I've got to go to lunch with my cousin."

"What rot! You can't. Why, we should have no end of a time driving—you go quite close to the Stakes by the shore of the Wash."

Joey began to wish very acutely that she had rung up Mote again directly she was cut off, and explained that she couldn't manage Saturday. Only John had startled her just for a minute; he had seemed so oddly sure that she must come, and then the breakfast gong had gone, and it was too late.

"Absolute rubbish," Noreen persisted. "Gabby, do you hear? Joey wants to lunch with her cousins and go with them instead of with us."

"I don't want—at all," poor Joey said. "Only—John seemed to want me . . ."

"The conceit of the kid," laughed Barbara.

"I mean he wanted me about signalling, I think," Joey explained in a hurry.

"Oh, tell him signalling must jolly well wait. Get the Head to let you 'phone," advised Barbara, and Joey got up from table with every intention of taking her advice. But, when she found herself in the passage leading to Miss Conyngham's room, the rather urgent note in John's voice haunted her. He had seemed to think it mattered that she should come to lunch to-day, and he had been so very kind in teaching her to signal. And if for some odd inexplicable reason it should matter, it would be so poor and un-English to have stayed away just because it would be more fun going with the others. After all, Noreen, who was nearly a year older than herself, had suggested there was some mystery going; and though she had said it half jokingly, it might be true all the same. She must put up with the duller drive, and not even ask if Noreen and Gabrielle might come with her to Mote; it was quite clear they would not want to. Joey gave herself a little shake and marched up to Miss Conyngham's door.

"Please, Cousin Greta asked me to lunch to-day, at least John spoke, and they'll send and take me to the match afterwards, if it's all right," she said.

Miss Conyngham was very busy, and hardly looked up. Joey half hoped she would say "Why do they want you?" and then she would have explained about the signalling, and the Head might have said it did not matter. As it was, she only glanced up from her papers for the fraction of a second.

"Yes, you will enjoy that, Jocelyn. Get ready in good time; don't keep your cousin waiting. That will do."

Joey went back to the others to explain briefly to several disapproving friends that she had *not* asked the Head's leave to decline the invitation.

"You're a silly juggins," Noreen stated, with candour. "But if it's done, it's done, I suppose: the Head would never stand being bothered again. Only mind you're not late—you'll spoil the match for Gabrielle and me if you are, remember."

"I won't be," Joey promised.

She was off to the Lab on the stroke of twelve. She did not suppose that Cousin Greta would send for her till nearly 1.30, as her lunch was not till 1.45; but there had been a great deal of tidying to do, and she must leave ten minutes for getting into her best frock, and brushing hair and nails. There wasn't a moment to lose.

As she ran round the corner of the great house, she noticed that the mares' tails of the

morning were spreading fast over the sky. "There's going to be a lot of wind presently," she thought, and that was all she did think about it just then, for the work she had to get done by 1.15 was decidedly uppermost in her mind, mingled with that little under current of surprise that John should be so interested in the Professor's signalling.

But just as she came within sight of the Lab she had to stop, for there was little Tiddles, walking solemnly along by herself, not seeming to mind for once that she was near the Professor's lair, and crying, not aloud as the babies did usually, but with the tears rolling slowly down her tiny cheeks.

In spite of her hurry Joey had to try and comfort the poor mite. "What is it, darling?"

Tiddles looked mournfully at her. "They won't let me go this afternoon," she said, with a sob. "They say Tiddles has a cold; but it will make her cold more ill to stay at home."

"Oh poor Tiddles!" sympathised Joey. "What frightfully hard lines. But I'll tell you all about it afterwards, darling; and it is a long drive, you know, quite nine miles, and it gets awfully cold in the late afternoon."

"You could cuddle Tiddles tight in your arms, Jo-ey; then she would not catch cold," Tiddles declared.

"But I'm not going with the brakes, duckie, so I couldn't hold you," Joey said.

"You are going to stay at home and play with Tiddles?" asked the mite, with dawning hope.

Joey shook her head, though she felt very unkind. "No, pet; but I'll tell you everything—Honour! and play with you to-morrow instead."

"Won't you play with her now, Jo-ey?" Tiddles pleaded. She had a quaint way of speaking, as though she were a personality quite distinct from the Tiddles whom the College petted and treated as a baby.

"I can't, darling; I have to go in there," Joey nodded in the direction of the Lab. "And you must let me go now, for I have to be busy."

Tiddles let go of her hand without a word, and stood looking after her with brimming eyes, but without actually crying. Joey felt a brute to leave her like that, but it had to be done. It was already nearly ten minutes past twelve; the Professor would be waiting for her.

He was. She saw that directly he unlocked the door to her, as quickly as though he had been standing just inside. His face was less impassive than usual, and it had a slightly yellowish look, while the eyes upon which Gabrielle had commented were strained. But the face relaxed a little at the sight of Joey. "You are late! I feared you would not come," he said.

"I'm so sorry; I just got kept by poor little Tiddles—she was crying," Joey explained. She did not wait to tell him why; the Professor did not care for children, and would not want to know she thought.

"Ah, de Belgian baby dat fear me," said the Professor, showing his teeth in a curious smile. "It is a strange idea you schoolgirls have of me, *n'est-ce pas?* To one I am an expert signaller—to another a fierce ogre."

"We all think you were frightfully decent though to square it with Miss Conyngham," Joey said, with conviction. "Do you know we are all going to the match—all the school! It's never been known before."

"Yes, I know dat," the Professor said. "You all go, mistresses and all at 1.15; except for you."

"Did *you* know I was going to my cousin's?" Joey asked surprised. She had never thought Professor Trouville would take half so much interest in what the schoolgirls did. He had never seemed to think anything about them, except that they were very stupid at chemistry.

However, she had no time for wondering. "Please, where would you like me to start tidying?" she asked, looking round the big, untidy place.

The Professor was bending over something on the table—a little square wooden box, into which he appeared to be fitting a small glass tube with care. He did not even look up.

“I need many bottles from the closet,” he said.

“Shall I get them?” asked Joey politely.

She dived into the innermost recesses of the closet. As she did so she heard quick steps across the floor, and the closet door slammed, making the place quite dark.

Joey was startled by the suddenness of the slam and darkness; but she dared not move for fear of stumbling over the bottles that littered the floor.

“Oh, please open the door—I can’t see anything,” she called, and as she called it the key turned in the lock.

“Don’t do that, please; I’m inside,” she shouted at the top of her voice; but even while she called that fact out confidently there was an unbelievable fear looking over her shoulder—she felt she would see it, if she turned her head—and the knowledge that the Professor knew she was there all the time, and had locked her in on purpose.

She put all the courage that was in her into the effort to push that horrid thought away.

“If you’re playing a trick on me, please stop it now, because there’s a lot of tidying and Miss

Conyngham will be fearfully vexed if I haven't changed my frock before my cousin sends for me," she urged. "They'll look for me if I'm not there when the car comes."

She talked into thick darkness and silence. She could hear the Professor moving about the room, but he returned no answer at all. She spoke into a blank wall.

The keyhole was still blocked with the key. She could see nothing, and what little she heard gave her no help at all. Still she tried hard to keep her end up.

"I wish you'd stop it now and let me out," she said firmly. "If it's a joke you've had the best of it, and if it's a punishment I should like to know what I've done. Anyhow, I don't see staying here."

The Professor came across to the closet; there was a little rattle, and the keyhole showed light. He had taken out the key, but he had not turned it.

Joey darted to the door as soon as that little ray of pale wintry daylight showed her where it was. She saw the Professor busily engaged in fitting the little wooden box into a cigar case that seemed made for it. His white linen coat had covered a neat dark tweed suit of undoubtedly English make; his moustache was gone. She saw that in the moment before he walked

quietly past the locked and keyless door of the dark closet, and out through the outer door of the Lab, which he locked behind him. Joey had seen that he was smiling a little.

CHAPTER XVIII

AT DEEPING ROYAL

COOK, though amazingly capable, was not an absolute magician; few people are. Perhaps it was not altogether astonishing, considering that she had only received her orders last night when dinner had been duly ordered, that the meal was not on the table quite at 12.45. It was in fact seven minutes late—not an extraordinary delay considering the circumstances, but enough to make the meal a scramble, and everybody feel a little fussed.

Noreen and Gabrielle had both meant to see Joey before she started, and impress on her the great importance of not allowing her cousin to start late for Deeping Royal. But Joey was not to be seen about the place when they put on coats, boots, and hats according to directions before lunch, in Remove II. Dressing-Room, and there was not a second to tear up to Blue Dorm, where she would be changing into her Sunday frock, when lunch was over. Everybody was hustled into the brakes in hot haste, with the exception of poor Tiddles, who was being consoled, however,

by lunch with the housekeeper in her own room, and a liberal supply of sweet biscuits and almonds and raisins.

"Rotten about Joey not coming with us," grumbled Noreen, as the long procession of brakes wound down the drive. "I can't think why she wanted to go to her cousin's to-day of all days."

"She didn't," Gabrielle remarked. "Joey does a few things she doesn't want."

"Well, it's very tiresome she should do it to-day. I bet she'll be late, and then she'll have to stand somewhere at the back, and we shan't be together at all."

"We could go back a little way to meet her," suggested Gabrielle, "and then whatever happens, we shall be together."

"Good egg! What luck you're Lower School Head, Gabby! If it were me I should have to ask leave, and probably get it refused too," Noreen whispered, for Miss Lambton was in the brake with them, and she was young and great on discipline, and was known to disapprove of some among the many concessions made to Gabrielle's exalted position. It was on the cards that, if she heard the plan, there would come an authoritative order to keep all together and not exert the privileges of Head of the Lower School.

The drive was a long one, but no one in the

whole school thought so for an instant. Besides the grand excitement of the match at the far end, the drive itself was so full of interest.

After passing the station the long procession of brakes kept to the straight raised road for a couple of miles only, then began to wind down on to the broad road which spanned the Deeps.

That road in itself spelt romance to the Redlands girls. It was still christened *Malfrey Street*, though that Roger Malfrey, who had owned the chief interest in the flourishing town and harbour that had once made Deeping Royal a famous name in the region of the great Wash, and had sunk a fortune and years and high hopes in the attempt to make a lasting road across the undrained fens, had gone—where effort that has failed may wear a brighter crown than fulfilment.

Now, centuries later, sand and shoals had silted up the harbour, and of the old greatness of Deeping Royal nothing remained but the magnificent twin churches of St. Philip and St. James (once hardly able to contain all the worshippers of the place), and open fields that carried strange names—"Fishmarket Field," "Mummers' Square," "Gold-Heart Street," and so on. Of Deeping Royal proper there remained a straggling fishing village of, perhaps, five hundred souls.

Malfrey Street ran in a line with the river for

three-quarters of its length. A quarter of a mile perhaps of Green Deeps separated the brimming, bankless river from the causeway that lifted itself from the grass even as the river seemed trying to do. And both seemed making straight as a die for the sea. Then, when Redlands was some seven miles behind, river and road appeared to change their minds, and, twisting sharply, ran parallel with the flat, dreary shore for more than two miles, only a narrow strip of shingle dividing the sand from the road. On such a day as this the road was soft with the sand that blew over the shingle and settled on it, only to be whirled away and flung among the coarse grass that still struggled to grow between river and road—fighting for existence with sea-pinks and purple madder.

The sand blew into the girls' eyes and proved rather a bar to absolute enjoyment at this point. The mares' tails of the morning were driving madly across a high, ragged sky; the wind had come with a vengeance.

"Bother it!" growled Noreen, pushing her curly ends of hair out of her eyes for about the hundredth time. No plait that was made could keep Noreen's curly hair in absolute order. "Hard luck on the teams to have such a wind as this."

"It's equally bad for both, anyway," Gabrielle

remarked. "And I'd back our side for pluck anywhere."

Miss Lambton was looking uneasily at the sky. "I hope it won't get much worse," she said.

But Gabrielle and Noreen had an optimistic spirit about a team captained by the great Ingrid Latimer, and refused to be really depressed by the weather on their account.

It was another fear which worried them.

"Suppose that cousin of Joey's thinks it's too bad to play, and won't send her?" Noreen whispered tragically.

"I believe she'll come somehow—trust her," Gabrielle whispered back reassuringly. "Anyhow, we'll go as far as the reservoir, and see. If we climb up at the side of that we can get a splendid view."

By this time they were within a quarter of a mile of Deeping Royal. To their left was still the desolate shore, with the narrow strip of shingle separating them from it, but there was a great sense of nearness to the waves which the high wind was driving in big and threatening, with a crest of foam.

Before them, crowning the slight rise on which the village stood, were the great twin churches, standing not a stone's-throw apart, with their massive beacon-towers outlined sharply against a clear, wind-swept space in the sky.

Below them clustered the village, through which the procession of brakes drove up a rather steep street to the inn, which one reached through an incongruous ivy-hung gateway, bearing on one mouldering dim red pillar the name cut deeply "Good Hope."

The "sweet Anne Wendover," whom Roger Malfrey had wooed in vain, because "the wasting sickness" wooed her more successfully, had lived there; and he must have ridden often through those great gates, which now stood wide to *chars-à-bancs* and brakes all the summer-time, and bore a large printed notice, "Teas provided."

"Joey would like this," whispered Gabrielle, as the first brake rattled into the old court-yard, and stood beneath the new sign.

"Yes, wouldn't she? Queer how one misses the kid," returned Noreen. "Specially queer when one remembers how we barred her coming from that twopenny-half-penny school."

"A man's a man for a' that," quoted Gabrielle. "We were snobs."

"You weren't anyway. Well, it's over and done with. Hope she won't be late."

"So do I," observed Mademoiselle de Lavernais, with a suddenness which took the two rather aback. They had not realised that she was so near, or that she would take the smallest interest in their conversation.

It had, in fact, been a surprise to everyone that "Maddy" should have come at all. She had never professed to take any interest in the school games, or in the life outside her classes. But she had turned up to-day at the hurried lunch, in her rusty black toque, and her coat and skirt of a cut belonging to some five years back, and had climbed into the same brake as Noreen and Gabrielle.

The two turned to her politely as soon as she joined in their conversation. "May we see if we can get you a good place, Mademoiselle?" Gabrielle asked; "and then we are going to try and keep one for Joey."

Mademoiselle smiled, her little tight-lipped smile, that seemed as though it were a thing stiff from disuse.

"Thank you, my child; I am obliged. But I fear I do not come to view the match, though it will give much pleasure to hear of the success of Redlands, I assure you. But the hockey is to me a mystery, and I seek a sketch of this place that may remind me of the fen-land when I no more see it."

Noreen stared. "But—but—are you going away?"

Mademoiselle smiled again. "Yes, after this term I return no more. So think no further of me, but watch for your friend."

She detached a little field-glass case that was slung across her narrow shoulders. "Take these if you will, and you will see her from afar."

"But won't you want them, Mademoiselle?" asked Gabrielle.

"Not yet, my child; I shall sketch first. Presently, if I can drag my old bones so far, I climb one of the twin towers that I may see the great view, which is to live in my heart also. You will bring them back before I need them. Adieu."

Gabrielle took the glasses gratefully. "Jolly decent of her," she whispered to Noreen, as the procession of girls began to wind their way out of the inn-yard, and down through the village towards Fishmarket Field, where the great match was to be played.

The wind was now terrifically high, a regular gale blowing straight from the sea. "Lucky they didn't bring Tiddles; the poor mite would have been scared out of her senses by all those great waves so close," Noreen said. "I wonder when high tide is, Gabby. It must be pretty near that now I should think."

Gabrielle looked out towards the sea. "I should think it must be. Someone told me high tide never comes beyond that bit of broken harbour wall, and it's up to it now."

"If it ever *does* come over, I should think Fishmarket Square is an enormous puddle," laughed

Noreen. "I don't see any sign of the Lines Ladies in the field. Do you? Suppose we're early."

Gabrielle looked at her watch. Noreen's spent most of its time at the nearest jeweller's being repaired!

"Yes, nearly a quarter before time; we might have chased Joey to Blue Dorm after all. Let's go along to meet her."

"One of the church towers would be a good place for sighting her," suggested Noreen; "but then we shouldn't be able to lay hold. So the road be it. Hope her cousin won't want to hang on to her by the way; we don't yearn to have the whole show tacked on to us."

"I don't suppose she'll come," Gabrielle said; "Lady Greta, I mean. She'll just send Joey in the car. She'll know we shall bring her back all right."

"I see. We just grab Joey, and say, 'Home, James,' haughtily to the chauffeur. Come on."

They slipped away unnoticed from the throng of girls at the entrance to Fishmarket Field, and made the best of their pace to the road, setting out along it at a steady double. The reservoir was nearly three-quarters of a mile away, but Noreen had come in first in the Hundred Yards Race for over-fourteens-under-sixteens at the College Sports in the summer, and Gabrielle

was a quick though not a lasting runner. The reservoir was reached in an easy six minutes; and they began to scramble up its high bank. The wind caught at their clothes; it seemed trying to whirl them bodily away. Noreen stopped for breath; Gabrielle caught her arm.

Then, "Try-the-other-side-against-the-wind," she shouted; "wind-might-blow-us-into-water-here."

Noreen had plenty of sense when she chose to use it; she nodded, and the two slithered down the rough brickwork, and dived around to the farther side so as to face that furious wind driving from the sea. They clambered up the bank, and Noreen, who reached the top first, crouched gasping and laughing, with her hat crushed under her arm, and her hair blowing wildly.

"Oh, I shall be blown clean off," she shouted down to her friend. "Come and help me hold on, Gabby; or give me Maddy's glasses."

Gabrielle, who was wrestling with her hat, had no hand free, and Noreen leant down and snatched the glasses from her.

"Yes, there's a car," she proclaimed. "Can't see what it is, or how many people in; but it seems to be doing a sprint all right. Bother that cyclist in front—he gets in the way."

"The car will catch him up directly though," said Gabrielle.

"It's a motor-cycle, stupid! My word! They're coming some pace."

"Which, the car people?"

"Both. Come up and look. Your turn with the glasses. I'll have just one more squint through them. My Sunday hat, and . . ."

"What is it?" demanded Gabrielle, scrambling up in a hurry, for Noreen had broken off short in her favourite ejaculation, as though she were almost too surprised to speak. "Isn't it Joey in the car?"

"Who do you think it is on the motor-cycle, and scorching fit to bust?" demanded Noreen in a thrilling whisper. "Why, our old Stinks Professor, no less."

She suddenly dived down from her position on the high-bricked bank, and dropped below, pulling Gabrielle with her, and nearly landing on terra firma with a great bump, in her haste.

"He won't have seen us; *he* hasn't got glasses. Let's hide and perk up like jacks in the box just as he goes by. He'll have the surprise of his life—and he ought to be pleased to see two of his promising pupils."

"You won't call out or anything to give him a jump, will you?" asked Gabrielle anxiously. She knew Noreen.

"Am I a juggins? He'd probably jump out of his skin and break his precious neck," Noreen said. "I only want to say a suitable good-bye to one who never bothered to say it to any of us, I noticed."

Her eyes brimming over with mischief, she caught Gabrielle's hand and dragged her round to the angle of the reservoir, still keeping the side farthest from the sea. "Now let's shin up this—more rest for our toes at the corner," she said; "then we can put our heads over the top, and, speaking with extraordinary politeness—oh, it's all right, Gabby—mention that the brainiest and the stupidest girl in Remove II. are desirous to bid him a fond farewell. What's the harm of that?"

"We shall miss Joey," objected Gabrielle. "I don't mean to do that for any Professor."

Noreen, who was scrambling up the angle of the reservoir, kicking vigorously to find a foothold, managed to rear her head enough to look over the top for a second.

"Nor do I, as it happens, but we shan't," she stated. "If it's a race, the Professor means to win, hands down."

CHAPTER XIX

AGAINST TIME

JOEY had shouted till she was hoarse; she had flung her inconsiderable weight upon the door again and again in the hope of forcing it—a feat performed with misleading ease in all Gavin's books of adventure.

She had to stop at last from sheer exhaustion, and then it was, when there was nothing else to do, that she began to think.

The Professor had locked her in, though she had called to him. So he had known that she was there. He was not deaf, so he had locked her in on purpose. That was the first thought which came at all clearly to her mind. The second was more puzzling still—why had he done it? Joey never knew exactly at what moment it was that a suspicion about the Professor crossed her mind. Her mind had travelled quite a long way first—as far as Mote. What would Cousin Greta say when the car came back without her? Oh, but it wouldn't—somebody would look for her. Yes, they would look, but would they look in the right place, for no one knew where she

had gone—no one but little Tiddles? All the girls would have gone by the time Cousin Greta's car came for her. Syb and Barbara most likely, and Gabrielle and Noreen most certainly, would never have given up hunting for her if she were missing in a mysterious way; but then they were her friends. The maids were very kind and good-natured—they would look for her in the Blue Dorm and the playroom, and one or two more likely places of that kind, but it was not to be expected they would go on looking after that.

They would probably think she had changed her mind, and gone off in one of the brakes, and tell Cousin Greta's chauffeur so. He would go back to Mote without her, and Cousin Greta would think her a girl who had been even ruder than on the former occasion, with less excuse; and John would think her a slacker, which was worse. Joey felt despairingly miserable at the thought of John's contempt; and with that misery came naturally the thought why John had wanted her to come to-day. She was not very clear as to the reason herself; but it was certainly something to do with the Professor's signalling. And somewhere at that point a suspicion lifted its head.

Joey groped for a box in the darkness, and sat down to consider. All kinds of queer things about the Professor kept shifting in a muddled

kaleidoscopic whirl across her memory—his curious anger on the first day they had met, the afternoon when she had tried to perform the duties of a scholarship kid by tidying the Lab; the violet handkerchief he used, with the queer marks on it; his prowls and signalling at night.

Sitting there in the darkness, with her fingers pressed tightly on her eyeballs to help her to think, Joey saw again that handkerchief hung out to dry upon the nursery guard of the First Form Room, and the little yellow marks that came out with the heat, and disappeared when the handkerchief was cool again. They might just have been washing marks—if washing marks ever did a thing like that.

Joey pressed so hard upon her eyeballs that she saw violet stars instead of handkerchiefs, and then, in the midst, she saw again distinctly those funny little marks which had shown themselves between the red-worked initials of the Professor's name, —.—. . .—

Dash, dot, dash, and dot, dot, dot, dash—that was Morse, and it spelt two letters, K and V. What could they stand for? The Professor's name was Achille, so he had informed Noreen, when, greatly daring, she had inquired one day a week or so back, after a particularly peaceful "stinks" class, when she had not been addressed as Fathead. Besides, what person in their senses

would have a name first worked, and then fixed on in some kind of invisible ink, and in Morse?

K V! K stood for Kenneth or Kitten or Kultur, or Kamerad, or Kaiser. (It was odd how many German words came unbidden to her mind.) And V might be Vauxhall or Vaterland! Yes, Vaterland was spelt with a V, though it sounded as if it were an F. Joey found that the two words Kaiser and Vaterland fixed themselves in her mind, and joined together with John's odd tone about the signalling, and the Professor's midnight expedition, and that lettering that she had read—the figures—31, and then the answer *Ja*. The 31st was to-day, and *Ja*, as Noreen had used it in the wonderful charade, meant Yes. What was going to happen to-day, and who had answered the Professor's signal?

Joey's mind went back slowly over the ground of this exciting month at Redlands, till it reached that Sunday spent at Mote, when she had come back to school alone, and been caught by the sea-roke, and had taken shelter in the Round Tower. The jumpy young man had certainly been doing odd things down below, and he had not been at all pleased to see her there at first; that was certain, though he had been quite kind and nice afterwards, and told such interesting stories. It had never occurred to Joey that the stories might

have been intended to have a deterrent effect upon her.

But could the young man's obvious jumpiness have anything to do with the mysterious business? Noreen had thought so, but Joey hoped it hadn't, for if it were he who had answered Ja it meant he was a German, and she didn't want him to be that. It was much easier to think of the Professor as a German; Joey had rather liked the young man, in spite of a slight natural contempt for his nervousness. And then, quite suddenly it all came over her; a sense of some great danger, which was none the less frightful, but rather the more, because it was all so vague.

Colonel Sturt had thought that Germans were creeping back into the country—Germans in no way altered by the wars, inside. And they were clever, everyone knew that—quite clever enough to call themselves French, and talk with a French accent that was good enough to take people in. Suppose she were right in what she guessed, and the Professor was not French at all but German, what was he doing in the school Lab? And what had he taken away with him from the Lab this 31st October, when the only person who could see what he was doing was locked into the closet, and likely to remain there till the girls came home from the match, and a proper search was instituted? Joey remembered that curious little box

which through the keyhole she had seen the Professor fit so carefully into his cigar case. It was not only something precious to him, but it was something he did not wish anybody else to see. And if he were a German, it was something that no one must see, because it was something that would do harm—not just to an insignificant person like herself, but to England. When Joey thought that she had to hold herself in, hard; or she would have flung herself upon the door, and beaten upon it in a frenzy till she was worn out. For everybody who might look for her was away, and no one knew anything except her imprisoned self; and the Professor was probably away by now with the mysterious box, putting every minute more distance between himself and Redlands.

But she forced herself to keep cool. She would want all her powers if she was to do any good.

She had heard the great clock from the old clock tower strike one quite a long time ago; yes, the School would have started. And there was not the tiniest bit of a window in her prison; it was all dark and close and filled with bottles that rattled and fell over if she moved, and boxes with sharp corners that cut her shins.

Mingled with the other stuffy smells there was the rank smell of newly fallen plaster. Though it was dry enough now there had been a good deal

of rain last week, and Noreen had mentioned casually that the Professor had been very cross because some rain came through the closet roof and spoilt one of his "preparations."

Joey stood up cautiously, and, crouching on the floor, felt for the fallen plaster, groping before her with both hands. Of course she banged her head against a shelf, and upset a bottle, which smelt overpoweringly, but she found the plaster, and stood up again considering. Somewhere there must be a tile off; and if one had gone, she could surely pull away more, and attract attention from above.

Only how did one get up there? Shelves, of course! Joey cleared a space on the lowest shelf, as well as she could in the darkness, and scrambled on to it, clinging to the one above. There was a crash and the tinkle of broken glass, but she was reckless now. It didn't matter if she smashed all the bottles in the "Stinks Shop," as long as she got out before it was too late.

Hanging on with one hand, she pushed away some bottle from the next shelf, and pulled herself up on to it; and so, with much bruised shins, she landed at the top and stood upright, the roof in her reach at last.

She had expected to find a hole through which she could put her hand, but she actually only felt a cold whistle of wind, and had to pick at the

lath and plaster for a good five minutes in the darkness before she could see any light through, and then only a chink.

She pushed with all her might, but nothing happened. There was a great shrieking and whistling above her head, and she realised that the wind must be rising; but nothing happened for all her efforts. She had thought that when one tile was off the others would follow naturally, but it seemed that only happened when you didn't want it to do so.

She must have something to push with—a shoe would do, only she must remember to put it on again before she stepped down upon the broken glass strewing the floor.

Joey unlaced one of her strong shoes, not without upsetting another bottle in the process, and, standing on tiptoe on the top shelf, began a violent assault upon the breach in the roof. If she could only make a hole large enough to get her head through, she thought, she would shout and shout and shout till somebody heard and came to let her out.

It is very tiring to stand on tiptoe, especially when one foot has no shoe on, and bang at something above you. Joey's arms ached and her toes ached, and her back; the height at which Calgarloch had stood amazed was hardly enough for her purpose; she had to stretch to her utmost ca-

capacity. "Lucky it wasn't Gabrielle who got shut up," she thought to herself, and then, through all her anxiety and struggling, came the thought of her two friends, Noreen and Gabrielle, and the plans they had made together for the afternoon. What were they doing now? Joey wondered. Were they remembering to look out for her? Yes, she felt sure they would do that; they were the kind of friends who stood by you. If only she had them to stand by her now!

Her attack on the roof did not appear to have any effect but that of bringing down unwanted showers of plaster that made her choke and sneeze and, more than once, gave her a nasty knock. But she kept on doggedly at her task—she had to do it somehow. English people couldn't wait to ask whether the job was do-able when your country wanted it done. And all the time she was imprisoned here the Professor was free to do what harm he liked, because nobody knew about him but herself.

Joey redoubled her efforts, and a tile went at last. She could hear it fall on to the ground below. One gone—perhaps the next would be easier. She dropped her tired arms for a moment to rest them, and in that moment the big clock struck two. Only half an hour to the time the match would start—that gave her a fresh sense of urgent need of haste. She smashed

furiously at the roof, and her shoe went through it and stuck so fast that she nearly came off the narrow shelf in her effort to dislodge it. In spite of her anxiety and her aching arms, she had to giggle at the thought of how absurd a shoe must look from below, sticking up through a hole in the roof.

It came away at last, and something happened at the same moment: there were steps outside and the key turned in the lock—somebody was coming in.

Joey shouted at the full pitch of her lungs, as she tumbled down recklessly from the shelf and hopped across the broken glass to the door.

“Oh, let me out! I’m shut in.”

There was an exclamation, and the voice of Frances, the superior parlour-maid who had opened the door to Joey on her arrival, called, “There, Miss Tiddles! You were right—she *was* here.”

A key slipped about in the lock of the closet door. “Miss Jocelyn, what have you done with the key?” Frances demanded.

Hope died in Joey’s heart. “The Professor took it.”

“I think he’s just gone,” Frances said. “I’ll try this key again; the locks are nearly the same.”

“Oh, Frances, do try, like a brick!” poor Joey cried in a frenzy. The Professor only just gone;

there might be time to stop him yet. Fennell the gardener was a large man, and he was probably somewhere about the place.

The key rattled, half-turned, stopped. "Bother!" cried Frances. "Run, Miss Tiddles, there's a dear, and see if the Professor's gone yet."

Wonder of wonders. Tiddles must be in or near the Lab—Tiddles who had such a horror of it. But Joey had not time for astonishment. "Stop her! Don't let her go!" she cried. If the Professor knew that she was escaping from her prison!

Frances seemed to be bending all her powers to the turning of the key. She was a determined person, accustomed to resisting the onslaughts of the Lower School upon the sugar basin, when she poured out the tea. "Almost got it—there!" she said, with a gasp.

The key wheezed and turned; the door opened—Joey was free. "*Thank you, Frances!*" she gasped, and fled past Frances, past little Tiddles standing solemn-eyed and scared at the top of the Lab steps, and away towards the house. She had put on her other shoe while Frances was wrestling with the key; but it was a dirty, hatless girl, with torn stockings and scratched hands, who flung herself round the angle of the house, as the steadily decreasing throb, throb of a motor-

bicycle announced that the Professor was making full speed down the drive, and out to the world beyond.

Joey did not call the gardener. The Professor had gone; he would be no good now. She dashed through the side door, and fled like the wind to Miss Conyngham's room. It would be empty now, of course; there never was such an emptiness anywhere as there was about the College to-day. But the telephone was there, and the telephone was what she wanted just now. John was the one person she could think of as able and willing to help; one wouldn't go to Frances with an unsupported story like hers. Frances would look at you as though she was thinking "Not another lump—one is plenty, Miss Jocelyn," and there would be an end of it. But John would understand.

She put the call through with feverish haste, and a hand that shook a little. Her knees were trembling too, and her mouth was dry, but it did not strike her that she had had no dinner. Other things were mattering so much.

A maid's voice answered her. "Can I speak to Mr. John Sturt?" Joey asked, trying to sound ordinary and business-like. "Oh—would you give him a message and say it's dreadfully important, please? Say I'm coming, and I don't think the Professor is French after all—he'll know—

and he's just gone off in a tearing hurry, and he took things from the Lab in his cigar case, and he's on a motorbike, and he locked me in." Joey jammed on the receiver, and, without waiting to get coat or hat, fled out of the front door and down the drive. She hoped Miss Conyngham wouldn't be very vexed by what she was going to do; but anyhow she would have to do it. She set out running through the iron gates and along that straight marsh road, along which the Professor must have gone first. She had forgotten to ask that a car should be sent to fetch her, but somehow she had no doubt that would be done. Only, she could not wait.

Her faith in John was justified. John must have beaten all speed limits. She hadn't run a mile, battling with the fierce side-wind that seemed to take all her breath away, when a cloud of dust in front of her, resolved itself into a long-nosed grey racing-car; there was a rending screech, and John's voice hailed her.

"Good! Thought I'd meet you; jump in. Mind my crutches."

Joey scrambled up, and he backed and turned the car neatly. "Did you meet him? she demanded breathlessly.

"Who? The Professor? No."

"Didn't you? I thought he'd go to the sta-

tion or something," Joey said blankly. "John, I believe he's a German in disguise."

"Bright Kid," John agreed. "I 'phoned to the Police Station before coming to meet you, but we could do with some more information. What's this about his locking you in?"

Joey told breathless reams, without a single comma.

John whistled. H'm! Now, where's the beggar gone?—that's the question."

The car had reached the point where the roads branched, to the right to Mote Deep Station and so on to the Grange; to the left towards the sea and Deeping Royal.

"If he only left just before you 'phoned I ought to have met him," mused John. "There isn't a train for three-quarters of an hour—and you bet a Hun knew that—they're so thorough. He must have gone to the Junction, and then he would pass Mote, of course."

"Think he went to have a squint at the hockey match?" suggested Joey doubtfully. John shook his head at her, more in sorrow than in anger.

Joey! Joey! Think I left my distracted relations in the middle of lunch, and brought my own special and particular car, just sent me by the Governor—you shall see all her points later on when we've settled this little affair—to hear you making cracked suggestions like that. If our

gentleman is out for mischief, he won't be specially keen to locate himself in the midst of a large crowd of astute Redlanders, you bet. Stand up in the seat—hold on to my shoulder, that's sound enough, and see if you can locate him anywhere."

Joey obeyed. She was breathless with excitement, and though John had jeered at her suggestion about Deeping Royal, he had certainly seemed impressed by her story, particularly by the violet handkerchief and the box packed in the fat cigar case. Of course, one would expect a big boy of seventeen, in naval uniform, to laugh at a girl of only thirteen; he wouldn't be human if he didn't.

She got upon the driving seat, holding to John's shoulder with one hand and trying to clear her hair out of her eyes with the other. The wind was furious; she found it quite hard to keep her footing, though John's car was low—a typical racer, if she had known more about cars. John's father had known his son's taste to a nicety; John wasn't out for ornament.

She saw the twisted chimneys of Mote Grange far away, and the corrugated iron roof of the station in the foreground. Then she looked along the road to the left.

Clear in the intensely clear atmosphere that often goes with furious wind, she saw the twin

towers of St. Philip and St. James standing against the grey line of the sea. But not one thought did she give to the great match that would be starting there in a very few minutes from now; for not so very far away, upon the white raised road, a figure was on foot beside a motor-bicycle, pushing it, running with it—*on foot!*

She grabbed John's shoulder. "Oh, John, I'm sure it's him—the Professor—and his bicycle won't go, or something."

"By Jove!" John cried. He glanced up at Joey with a grin. "I suppose I ought to scoot to Mote and get help, and drop you in Aunt Greta's charge."

"John! he'd get away!" shrieked Joey.

John grinned again. "He probably would. We won't do what we ought. Get down, Kid. I'm going to let her rip."

Speed record certainly did not concern John just then—the long-snouted racer leapt forward, bumping wildly with the pace which John got out of her.

Joey crouched low in the car, feeling as though her hair was being torn from her head, but blissfully happy all the same. She had absolute confidence in John; he would deal with the Professor. It did not occur to her that seventeen-year-old John on crutches might not be a match

for a determined man in perfect health. Her only fear was that the motor-bicycle might get going too soon.

There are few bends in a fen road. Those who made them may have had the roads of Russia in their minds, for fen roads tend to be drawn with a ruler from end to end.

They saw the Professor, still struggling with his bicycle, more than a mile away. They saw him run pushing his machine, and this time it fired and went.

Joey said, "Oh!" in deep disappointment. John grinned again.

"Some race, Joey! Hold tight—if he can rip, so can we."

He only spoke once again. "You might loosen my dirk, Kid; it's your side."

Then he bent himself to the wheel, and got every inch of speed out of the car that was in her. The distance between car and bicycle diminished slowly.

The wind roared and tasted salt to the lips; the towers of St. Philip and St. James stood higher and higher. And now the high parapet of the reservoir was in sight. When they passed that, Deeping Royal was not three-quarters of a mile away.

"He must be going to see the match after all!" shrieked Joey. She had to scream to run any

chance of being heard above the roar of wind and the racing, lurching car.

There was still half a mile between car and bicycle when the bicycle was up to the reservoir, and the Professor clapped on his brakes, and dashed for it on foot.

"John!" Joey screamed. The play, which the occupants of Blue Dorm had acted to celebrate Miss Craigie's return, rushed suddenly into her mind. She remembered the box of tiny bottles hidden in the cigar case, and the thin cruel smile she had seen on the Professor's face as she looked at him through the keyhole.

Perhaps John had the same thought in his mind. The car bumped furiously, and all but overturned.

The Professor disappeared round the angle of the reservoir.

CHAPTER XX

THE PROFESSOR'S DRIVE

IT all happened so quickly that there was no time to think or wonder, hardly time even to cry out.

Something that looked like a hand, emerging from a white cuff and a dark coat sleeve, appeared for one instant above the parapet of the reservoir just by the angle, and almost the same instant two heads, surmounted by the close green hats of the Redland girls, shot up to one side of it. The arm waved wildly, and then disappeared with suddenness below the parapet, the two heads diving down after it with startling celerity.

If ever John's new car travelled, it travelled then!

Joey forgot everything else—the match—the roaring furious wind, the sense of cold and hunger—what *was* happening at the reservoir? And then they were there!

John ran the car into the grass of the roadside; the reservoir stood a little back from the road. He brought the car to a standstill, and grasped the crutches which Joey had ready for

him. Together they tore round the angle of the great reservoir, Joey leading.

On the ground below it sat the Professor, one hand clasping the back of his head. He held something close in his other hand.

Before him stood Noreen and Gabrielle, the latter really apologetic, the former certainly inclined to giggle, though she was making a valiant effort to restrain herself.

"I'm frightfully sorry we startled you so," Noreen was explaining. "We didn't mean to; we were just watching for Joey, and then we saw you, and thought it would be fun to take you by surprise. I never thought we should make you fall back. Honour! and as to Gabrielle, it wasn't her plan at all, so you can't blame her."

Noreen's clear carrying voice reached Joey without any difficulty, as she slipped and stumbled over the coarse, sandy grass. The Professor was getting dazedly to his feet while she was speaking; he did not appear to be much mollified by her apology.

"You haf giv me de bad fall," he said. "You haf made me de headache; I cannot smoke . . ."

He raised his right arm, as though to hurl away in a temper the thick cigar case that he held. It was open; he crushed his thick thumb down on one of the tiny blown-glass bottles that filled it. Joey gave a leap like a young chamois and

caught his arm. "The cigar case!" she panted, and Gabrielle caught it as it dropped from the Professor's hand in the surprise and shock.

He turned furiously upon Joey. "You!" he shouted, and flung her violently away from him, snatching at the little case in Gabby's hand before she was prepared.

"John!" Joey screamed; but John was finding it hard going with crutches over the uneven grass, and he was not yet up with them. The Professor broke through the little crowd of girls and dashed for his bicycle. He was on it—if only it would refuse to start! No such luck—he was turning it in the road—he was off!

John dropped one crutch, and stooped down. Next moment his dirk was hurtling through the air, thrown with an accuracy that just got the back wheel tyre. John had bowled for Dartmouth. There was a loud explosion, and bicycle and Professor were mixed up in a heap on the road.

"Lucky you loosened the dirk," John said to Joey, and then they all hurried breathlessly to their fallen enemy.

The Professor was lying quite still half underneath his bicycle.

"Is he killed?" asked Gabrielle, in a quiet awestruck little voice.

John bent over him, and unbuttoned his waist-



"I'M FRIGHTFULLY SORRY WE STARTLED YOU SO"

coat, putting his hand inside. "He's only stunned. Take the case, Joey."

The Professor had flung it into his coat pocket; Joey took it out and gave it to John. He opened it, and took one of the unbroken bottles out, looking at it anxiously. "I expect this was what he worked in the Lab to get done unsuspected."

"Think he's got poisonous germs or something bottled there?" asked Noreen.

"I'm no chemist; but you bet it's some putrid game, like spreading a rotten disease by water. We've got to hand it over to the police any way, and some bacteriologist will tell us all about it. But first we'll have this chap into the car. Can you spare one of those sash things you wear? We'd better tie his hands behind him, or he'll be getting away when he comes to."

Three white braid sashes were at once forthcoming; John took Noreen's, and tied the Professor up thereby securely.

"Doesn't he look different without his moustache!" Noreen observed.

"Oh, he's shaved that, has he?" John asked.

"He took it off in the Lab; it wasn't a real one," Joey explained.

John whistled, and grinned approvingly.

"You saw a fair lot through your keyhole! Well, I suppose it's pretty clear that our gentleman was in the habit of altering his appearance

for reasons of his own. Another item in his bill. But he didn't show the usual Hun attention to detail—when he took the key out before he had finished everything, did he?"

"He thought no one would know where he was. He forgot Tiddles, I expect," Joey contributed.

John tied the last knot with a flourish, just as the Professor began to show signs of returning consciousness.

"Tiddles? Oh, the Belgian baby! Yes, I expect he forgot her. So she knew you were there."

"Yes; I think she saw my shoe sticking out of the hole I made in the roof, and fetched Frances—the pet!" Joey said. "I say, Gabrielle, *do* you think I'll be in a fearful row with Miss Conyngham again? for I've done dreadful things in the Lab, besides coming out all untidy."

"I doubt if you'll get it in the neck from your Miss Conyngham this time," John told her cheerfully. "But now we must attend to business. How do you find yourself now, sir? Can you get into my car, or do you want to be helped there?"

The Professor for all answer made a struggle with his hands, but the braid was strong, and John knew how to tie his knots.

"No go," said John. "You had better come

quietly. I'm sorry we had to tie you up; but we'll make you as comfortable as we can."

The Professor regained his breath and his senses.

"I do not understand dis outrage," he said. "I shall spik of it to Miss Conyngham instantly. Dese girls shall be punished. . . ."

"I'm afraid you've cut your cheek a bit," John said concernedly. "Let me get your handkerchief—do you keep it in your pocket or up your sleeve? It's the violet handkerchief I want, the one where the code letters come out when you hold it to the fire—K V, you know."

The shot went home. "What is this fairy tale," the Professor asked contemptuously. But he had paused before he asked it—the pause had been perceptible.

"Now will you get into the car, Professor Trouville," John said politely. "I think you see that we have some grounds for this—outrage."

He turned to the girls. "I'll drive you to the match if you like, and then this gentleman on to the police station."

The Professor struggled unwillingly to his feet. Joey looked at Gabrielle and Noreen. The match had ceased to be of the first importance.

Besides John was very lame; if the Professor got loose, by any chance, he might need their help. She turned to Gabrielle. "Do you think

we might go with John? John, this is Gabrielle, she's Head of the Lower School and a frightful knut, and can give leave for all kinds of things. The other is Noreen, and they're both special friends."

"Look here," said John to Gabrielle, "I really think you had better give leave for the three of you to see the affair through. The circumstances are exceptional—and I doubt if there will be much of a match to-day in this wind, anyhow. Besides I'll run you back to Deeping Royal before anyone's missed you, and then you can explain to your boss."

"Well I think we might, and thank you ever so much," Gabrielle answered very properly, but with eyes that sparkled.

"Right!" John said, and then they all bundled into the car, Professor and all, leaving the damaged bicycle in the road. It was a terrible squeeze, of course, to get five into a two-seater; but much can be done when people are determined. The Professor, yellow and strained-looking, was wedged in between John and Gabrielle; while Joey and Noreen squeezed somehow into the little emergency seat behind. The car dashed back along the road they had come.

As they had tucked themselves in Joey noticed that Noreen's shoes were squelching with wet.

"Did you sit on the edge and put your feet in the reservoir?" she asked.

Noreen laughed. "No, but when I wedged my feet at the angle it seemed to have sprung a leak. Hush! Don't tell Gabrielle. She'll probably think we ought to go back like the Dutch kid, and stop it with a finger."

"I expect it will do all right if we report it at the police station," Joey said. "But it must be a healthy leak, if it's made you as wet as all that."

"It's always happening," explained Noreen, the experienced. "The reservoir was done with scamped work in the first instance—haven't you heard our beloved Miss Craigie draw a moral for our benefit? Oh, well, if you haven't, you will. And they're always having to shore up one bank or another . . . I say, you're shivering; it is jolly cold for motoring."

John caught the words, and rammed on his brakes. "What an ass I am! Put on my coat, Kid."

He began to struggle out of his motor-coat. His arms were half in and half out when the Professor sprang to his feet, his hands freed, the frayed ends of the braid sash hanging. He had John's dirk in his left hand; he had released himself by rubbing up against it; in his right was a small revolver.

"Now I think we shall talk rather differently," he snarled. "You will drive me to the station, young gentleman, and these young ladies will get out to walk to Deeping Royal or Redlands—I care not which."

The Professor was holding the revolver within an inch of John's neck. Joey wondered whether it was all a bad dream, or a reality in which she ought to make a snatch at the revolver, and try and overpower the Professor. But John settled the question before she had time to decide.

"Get out, girls," he said. "You had better go straight to Deeping Royal. I'll drive the Professor along as he suggests."

Joey got out obediently, and the other two followed suit.

"Hurry!" the Professor snarled.

John got his hands free of his coat in leisurely fashion. The girls stood close together on the road. "Let's go for him," whispered Noreen; but Joey was looking at John.

John's thin brown face was perfectly impassive, but his right eyelid lay dead upon his cheek. Joey knew quite well that John, alone, and with a very game leg, had nevertheless something up his sleeve.

"Get on!" reiterated the Professor. His French accent was dropping from him, Joey noticed; he spoke good English now, though with

the hard guttural which hardly any Englishman achieves.

The car was a self-starter. John whirled off without remark, leaving the three Redlands girls stranded rather forlornly on the wind-swept road.

They all three shivered a little as the car grew smaller and smaller in the distance. They were afraid for John, and also puzzled by his acquiescence in the situation—an acquiescence so out of keeping with the little bit of ribbon on his jacket. Added to which they were all three very cold, and a longish walk and drive lay between them and tea.

Noreen broke the silence. "I vote we get on to Deeping Royal, and tell Miss Conyngham what has happened. Some story anyhow, if she does row us for sloping off. Won't she be jolly excited to know about the Professor? What do you say, Gabrielle and Joey?"

"Yes, I think we had better go now," Gabrielle agreed. "I'm afraid we can't do anything for John, and Miss Conyngham ought to know."

But Joey stood still stubbornly by the roadside. "I don't care if she ought; I'm going to wait for John," she said. "At least, I mean, I'm going along to Mote to tell Cousin Greta what's happened to him."

Joey tried to speak as though she did not mind

a bit about the three-mile tramp, or anything. "You two go along to the match, and tell Miss Conyngham. I'll try and square up the disobedience and being so untidy, and letting Redlands down, afterwards, when there's time."

Joey thought she had never realised till then what her two friends could be. Each seized an arm.

"Slink back to the match, and leave you to be in a row all by yourself? Likely, isn't it, you juggins?" Noreen inquired scornfully. And Gabrielle—Gabrielle, Head of the Lower School, who had never been known to break a rule since Joey had known her, added calmly:

"We'll all go to Mote, Joey; I think you are right. Of course it is disobeying the Redlands rule; but I will explain to Miss Conyngham why we did it, afterwards. In any case we couldn't leave you."

"I say, you are bricks!" Joey said rather chokingly, and then the three set out together at a run towards the turning to Mote. They had passed it in the car, and were indeed now within about half a mile of the Round Tower. Joey found herself noticing, for all her anxiety about John, how gaunt and sinister it looked, standing up against the shivering sodden grass, and the dreary wind-swept sky, in that minute before

she and the others turned their backs upon it, and began to struggle towards Mote in the teeth of a wind that seemed to have grown overwhelmingly strong in the last few minutes.

Now that they faced towards the sea it was truly terrific. Noreen and Gabrielle had their close school hats jammed low upon their foreheads, and even then it was almost impossible to keep them on. Joey, being hatless, was not affected by this difficulty; but her djibbah flapped furiously about her, her hair was all over the place, and she found it really difficult to keep her footing. It was extraordinary how much the gale had grown within the last twelve or fifteen minutes.

But the three friends locked arms and fought their way on determinedly. Joey meant to get somehow to Mote, and let John's people know what he was doing.

"And after that we shall probably meet the school—going home," Gabrielle gasped out; "and we can get ourselves picked up. They'll have to come back; they can never play the match out in this wind."

"I hope they come along soon; it's going to pour by the look of the sky, and we haven't got macs," Noreen said. "There! I felt a splash of rain in my face already."

"So did I; but it wasn't rain, it tasted salt," panted Gabrielle.

"Spray couldn't come out here, could it?" asked Joey. "We're a long way from the sea."

"About a mile," Noreen screamed in her ear.

"Oh, no, spray couldn't come out here, even at the most extraordinarily high tide."

Another dash in their faces. "*That* came from the river," said Gabrielle.

They had almost reached the low-arched bridge that spans the river Mentle, about three-quarters of a mile beyond the Round Tower. The water was surging angrily against the arches, and, at intervals of a minute or so, sending up a great splash over the very low stone border and into the road.

"Funny, because it can't be high tide yet," said Noreen. "I looked it up to see if there was any chance of the Team getting splashed in Fishmarket Field. It isn't till 3.40."

"Then it's going to be an extra specially high one," remarked the experienced Gabrielle, looking down at the surging, bankless Mentle.

"I should think they would get some healthy splashes in the field; the spray comes right over the old sea-wall in a really rough tide."

"Oh, never mind the old tide—let's get on to Mote!" urged Joey.

And just as she said it, the thing happened.

There was a sudden appalling roar—a long, crashing roar. The river gave a sort of shuddering sigh, and then, far off along its brimming level, something seemed to rise up—a great grey wall, foam-tipped. Joey stared at it, fascinated, but not frightened.

But Gabrielle knew the fens. She grasped Joey roughly by the arm, Gabrielle, who was always so gentle in her ways.

“Come on! Run! Run back from the river,” she screamed. “That’s an Eigre!”

Joey hadn’t a notion what an Eigre might be, but there was urgency in Gabrielle’s tone. They all three turned and ran back along the road that they had come. Only Joey looked over her shoulder, and thought she never would forget what she saw as long as she lived.

The wall of water, curling as it came, swept nearer; then suddenly it broke with a noise like thunder, and, with a great swirl and rush, the water was over the bridge in a whirl, was spreading far and wide, was about their feet.

“*Run!*” Gabrielle shouted again, as a second great surge brought the water washing against their knees. And run they did, through a world that seemed all water, as far as the eye could reach.

No one who was at Redlands then, least of all those three friends, will ever forget that wild 31st

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of October, when the old sea-wall went down, and the highest tide that men had known for thirty years burst in upon the Deeps of Little Holland!

CHAPTER XXI

IN THE ROUND TOWER

THERE are white posts set at intervals along the fen roads to guide travellers in the dark. A necessary precaution as the roads are often ditch-bordered, and for half the year those ditches brim.

The posts are barely two feet in height; by the time the girls had reached the spot where John had left them, only the tops of those posts were left uncovered; the tide was plainly driving in with terrific force, and wherever they looked they saw nothing but the waste of tossing water.

Not one of the three would have owned to being frightened, and it was in quite a cheerful voice that Noreen put their worst danger into words.

“Hurry up, you two. We must get somewhere before the posts cover, or we shan’t be able to find the road.”

Joey remembered the deep slanting ditches; to slip into one of them had been a very real danger on that foggy Sunday when she had come back alone from Cousin Greta’s; to do so now

would be almost certain death. She did her best to splash along faster, though she was beginning to feel decidedly conscious that it was a long time since breakfast, and that she was chilled to the bone. It seemed as though the three of them had been splashing through that cold swirly water for years, and there didn't seem any particular end to it; and what had happened to John?

"Where are we going?" she asked dully. "The Round Tower is nearest."

She had to look round, as she spoke, to make sure that the tower was there. All the familiar objects looked so different, standing in this vast sea.

"Yes, it's nearest, but we won't go there," Gabrielle said, in her sensible way. "You see, though it's uncomfortable and very cold to go wading along like this, we are quite safe on the road till the water is a good bit deeper. To try and get across the Deeps with the floods out would be almost as risky as it would have been to try and cross the river just now when it was pouring across the bridge. If we just keep along quietly we shall come to the turning off to Hesgate Church and Rectory, and we can get shelter there till the tide goes down, or someone comes for us."

Gabrielle's matter-of-fact tone had a very

cheering effect. She was the smallest of the three, but she was quite the Head of the Lower School just then, and no one thought of disputing her verdict.

"What do you think the others are doing?" Joey asked anxiously. She had been afraid to ask that question before, but Gabrielle seemed so undisturbed by the ways of floods that she felt things could not be as bad as they had seemed.

"I think they will be quite all right," Gabrielle said. "You see Deeping Royal is used to high tides and things of that sort, and people always take refuge in the churches there. The towers were built frightfully strong on purpose. Miss Conyngham once told us about a big flood, in 1830 it was, I think, and the people had to stay in the twin towers all night, while the great waves surged round. One man was so grateful that he gave a new peal of bells to both towers, and put a text on the biggest bell: 'The flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house and could not shake it.'"

"I like that," Joey said.

"Yes, wasn't it decent, and he never gave his name either; he was a stranger in Deeping Royal, and he just sent the bells from London when he had got away safely. The Vicar had 'The gift of a grateful heart,' carved below his

text on the bell, and they ring a peal every year on the anniversary of the great flood in memory of him. That day comes in the spring; we always get high tides—special tides, you know—at spring and autumn.”

“Well, this one will have come to its highest pretty soon, I expect,” Joey said. “You’ve got a watch, Gabrielle; what’s the time?”

Gabrielle looked. “Five past three; and we’re just opposite the Round Tower; that means it isn’t much more than a mile to Hesgate Rectory. We shall . . .”

What they might have done remained unknown. There was a curious sound behind them, nothing very loud, but loud enough to make them look round. The water all around them seemed to upheave violently. Instinctively they clung together, and it was a mercy that they did. There was a terrific suck and gurgle about them, and next moment the white posts were all obliterated, and they were swaying helplessly in a great waste of water, which had suddenly grown frighteningly deep. “What is it?” Joey gasped, as the first shock passed, and they found themselves still on their feet, but with the water washing nearly to their waists.

“I don’t know,” Gabrielle said, staring around her, but Noreen gave a little choke. “You bet

it's the reservoir—that weak bank gone—and it's still forty minutes to high tide.”

Joey woke up. “We must get across to the Round Tower.”

“It's locked, isn't it?” asked Noreen. It was a proof she was inwardly frightened that she did not add, “you juggins!”

“And there's a bad ditch somewhere near it, Joey,” Gabrielle added. “We could never find it now.”

“I could,” Joey spoke confidently. “I've been there, remember. Hold on to me, Gabby; I'm sure I can dodge that ditch; I know where it was.”

Gabrielle hesitated for a moment; while Noreen and Joey looked anxiously at her. Every one knew that Gabrielle could not swim. Noreen was not much of a performer; but Gabrielle had been too delicate to learn at all so far.

“We might keep the road,” she said; “but we mightn't, and it's a mile. We'll risk the ditch—on one condition, Joey. If we slip—and we'll be going into deeper water anyhow, you know—you and Noreen must save yourselves, and not bother about me.”

“We're not going to slip, but we're going to hurry,” Joey said. “I'll go in front, because I know the way. You hold on to me, Gabby, and

Noreen hold on to you. We'll have to jump the roadside ditch; it isn't a wide one, but it will make a beastly splash. When I say Now!"

They turned sideways. "Now!" shrieked Joey. They all jumped, and Noreen failed to clear the ditch, and had to be pulled out, spluttering and choking, by the other two.

They had landed in water that was more than waist high, for the road was raised. The question was how much more the fen dipped before they reached the tower. Joey plunged on, but cautiously, putting one foot well in advance of the other, in terror of that yawning ditch. It was all very well to say so confidently that she remembered its exact position; how was one to be sure of the exact position of anything with all the world water, and a sense that at any moment one might step clean out of one's depth? Joey had swum well out of her depth on the last seaside holiday the family had shared, but then Father was beside her to call, "Steady! and don't hurry your stroke"; and "Put your hand up on my shoulder," when she was getting tired. Swimming now would be a very different matter with Noreen, who had only just achieved the width of the Redlands swimming bath last summer, and Gabrielle, who was helpless, to bring to safety besides herself. All the same she never thought for an instant that she might not be

able to do it; that sort of thought was not for English people. One just must.

The tide was rushing in at a truly terrific pace, but the three, gripping desperately to each other, kept their footing and struggled on. And so, after what seemed an eternity of nightmare struggling through the deepening water, they flung themselves against the wall of the Round Tower at last.

"Hold on, Gabby; I have to find the door," Joey cried cheerfully. The worst was over now, she thought; the tower floor was well raised, and inside there was a ladder. She waded round to the narrow ledge, scrambled up, and felt the door.

It was bolted as before, and this time she had no knife in her pocket. To be accurate she had no pocket in her djibbah; when she had begun this long queer day her handkerchief had been up her sleeve. Now it was probably whirling hither and thither about the Deeps.

Joey stooped a little, and put her mouth to the chink. She must make the young man hear.

"I say, do let us in. We're outside your door."

She had shouted at the top of her voice, and she got an answer, though it was not the answer she expected. It was a queer muffled cry, but it was a word, and the word was "Help!"

Joey looked down from her slippery stand upon Noreen and Gabrielle. Gabrielle was shoulder deep; she was clinging silently to the rough wall of the tower, but there was nothing much to take hold of. Joey must get the door open and go to her help at once.

"Got a knife, either of you?" she jerked at them.

"I have," called Noreen.

Joey did not dare tell them to move from their precarious position. The water was washing hard against the tower; Gabrielle at least could be washed away from it quite easily if she loosened her grip.

"Chuck it here!" she shouted, and prayed that she might not muff the catch. Noreen fumbled and threw. Joey, leaning a little away from the door, with one hand clinging, caught the knife as it flew across the water, and held it—safe!

She had it open in a second, and forced the bolt a minute later. Kneeling in the doorway, she undid her braid sash, meaning to fling it out to Noreen and Gabrielle.

"Get hold; we're all right now."

And as she spoke she heard again that muffled call for help from somewhere underneath. Then, of course, she remembered her first visit, and

the jumpy young man who had come up through the trap-door.

The floor of the Round Tower was hardly under water yet; but what was it like underneath? That last call had been the choked effort of someone who couldn't breathe.

Joey stood irresolute for one second—but only one. The jumpy young man was probably a German, since he and the Professor had been signalling to one another; but when you were English you couldn't leave even a Hun to die when he had called for help. Father had risked his life to bring in a wounded German who was lying in agony in a shell-swept reach of No-Man's Land. She would not even have hesitated for that second, if it had not been for the thought of Gabrielle and Noreen holding on precariously, with the deepening water washing round them, waiting for her help. In her heart she knew that her friends would not want her to hesitate.

She darted across the floor to the corner where the trap-door was, and then she saw what had happened. The owner of the tower had been right in considering it rather shaky, and none too safe. A great stone had come down, and lay upon the trap-door, making it quite impossible to push up from below.

Joey flung herself upon the great stone. "All right—I'll get it open," she shouted; but there

was no answer. That faint choked call was not repeated.

She pushed at the stone with all her strength, but it did not budge. She pushed again, with a terrible nightmare feeling that Gabrielle, her friend, could not keep her footing in the water, and was drowning while she wasted time. She took a deep breath, and pushed, with cracking muscles, for the third time, and the stone rolled over with a loud splash, and the trap was free.

"Can you push?" she shouted. When she had seen him before the young man had come up a ladder propped against the side, and pushed the trap up from below. But now there was no sound or answer. Joey thought of Gabrielle's story of the man who had been drowned in the room below the Round Tower in just such another flood, and hunted desperately for something she could catch at and pull the trap-door up.

She found a ring at last, and tugged with all her might. The trap raised, and water sluiced down into the opening, water that was washing in through the open door. The water from above met the water from below with a great splash. There was no other sound.

Joey peered down the wide trap. Two groping hands and a dead white face with staring eyes showing dimly through the darkness. Black

water, of an unknown depth, washed to and fro.

She flung herself face downwards on the edge, and dropped her braid sash straight between the groping hands. "Catch hold!"

The hands fumbled blindly, and then gripped. There was a fierce tug on the impromptu rope. Joey dug her toes into the floor, in the effort to escape being pulled in.

"That's right, hold on, and get to the ladder," she shouted. "Make haste."

She looked at the side where the ladder had been; it was gone! And the water below was still a good long way below the level of the floor, and the trickle washing in would not raise it till too late for Gabrielle and Noreen.

Joey looked round desperately for something to which she could secure one end of her sash. At all costs she must hurry to the help of the other two. But there was nothing at all, nothing except the ladder on the farther side of the tower, fixed to the wall; and to reach that would require a sash of treble the length. No, there was only one thing to be done, unless she meant to abandon the young man to his fate—and one couldn't let an enemy drown when one was a soldier's daughter.

"It's all right. I'll pull you up; but please keep quiet and don't jerk, or you'll drag me in,"

she called down, trying to speak confidently. "Don't start to come up till I say 'Now'!" she added hastily, as a frantic jerk to the rope all but had her through the trap.

She slithered back over the floor to the farthest extent her sash would give her, and got behind the stone that she had moved with so much difficulty. Then she looped the end of her sash, got a desperate grip, took a long breath, and shrieked "Now!"

It was a frightful tug. Her straining body pushed the heavy stone with it nearer and nearer to the edge. Her hands seemed as though they were being wrenched away from her wrists, and her arms from her shoulders. The toes and her knees scraped the stone of the floor as she dug them in fiercely to gain hold, and she was dragged forward all the time. It never occurred to her to let go, but she knew vaguely that it was only a question of seconds before she went through the trap for all her efforts. And then a hand caught the edge of the trap, and the strain slackened suddenly.

Joey fell backwards, and lay there panting and speechless for a second, while the young man exhaustedly dragged himself up to safety. But she only lay for one moment; then struggled up and to the door.

Her heart was thumping with hammer

strokes; she felt sure that she would not see her friends. It seemed such years that she had been wrestling with the trap-door, and trying to grip on to that slippery sash.

But they were there; clinging tightly—Noreen with her arm round Gabrielle, both with their heads turned anxiously to the door. Noreen spoke quite cheerfully, though with chattering teeth.

"I say, buck up with that sash, you juggins!" she grinned. "We're getting wet."

Joey didn't answer, because there was such a lump in her throat that she couldn't. She threw the pulled and ravelled sash, and Noreen caught it. Steadying themselves with it and the wall of the tower she and Gabrielle came safely to the door, and scrambled up into the tower.

Joey hugged them both, regardless of the young man's presence. "Oh, you dears!"

"What made you such an age?" Noreen inquired. "Did you stop to explore the tower or something?"

The young man answered the question. "She saved my life. I was suffocating there, and drowning, and she pulled me up. I owe her my life."

"Oh, that's all right," Joey said, rather flustered. "Anyone would have lent a hand, of

course. But do you mind telling us now whether you are in league with our Stinks Professor—you signal to him, don't you? But I hope you aren't doing beastly things like poisoning water, for you don't seem that sort."

The jumpy young man stared at the three Redlands girls, till his eyes seemed ready to start from his head. Then he gasped, "How do you know?"

"Because we've got the Professor—at least I think John has—and anyhow we've spoilt his game," Joey announced triumphantly. "But we want to know if you've been doing those kind of beastly spy things too—because we don't want to be hateful, but we couldn't shake hands with you and be friends if you have!"

They stood ankle-deep in the water, and stared at one another, Joey and the man whose life she had saved. There was a dead silence for a whole minute; then he said:

"I have worked with him, and I knew something of his plans, but *mon Dieu!* how I hated them and him. For my home is in Alsace, and my father and mother were French. The Professor, who is no more French than you are, had lent my father money, and I was to work it out as his assistant. And since the War he has forced me to work for him in this country, know-

ing I was too much implicated to betray him. And that is the truth, Mademoiselle."

Joey held out her hand. "You'll chuck it now, of course, and I'm sure Colonel Sturt will see about your not getting into trouble; and, if you don't mind, I could speak to Mademoiselle de Lavernais about you—she comes from Alsace too. We're no end glad you're all right, really."

"Rather!" said Noreen and Gabrielle with great heartiness, and all three shook hands with the Alsatian solemnly.

"What's your name?" asked Joey, feeling that she ought to act as mistress of the ceremonies in right of her former acquaintance with the jumpy young man.

"I was baptized 'Hans'; when the doors and windows were all shut my parents called me 'Jean,' 'Jean Corvette,'" he said.

"Righto, we'll call you that," Joey said. "I thought you couldn't be a Hunnish kind of German when you were so decent to me that Sunday, you know. We'll introduce ourselves, and then it will all be as right as rain. This is Gabrielle Arden, and here's Noreen O'Hara, and I'm Joey Graham."

Two drowned rats bowed politely in acknowledgment of Joey's introduction; but the jumpy young man was not looking at them. He was staring at Joey.

"Graham—Graham—" he muttered; then suddenly: "I was with the gardeners that night you act in the big hall, and you have the look of him then, Mademoiselle. Was your father a major of the name of Graham?"

"Yes, he was; but the Huns killed him with their beastliness to him when he was wounded and a prisoner," Joey said.

"You saved my life; I will tell you all I know," the young man said. "When the Professor sent for me to come here, two months ago, Major Graham was *not* dead, but alive and working in the salt mines at Kochnecht."

"*What?*" Joey gasped. "He was reported killed."

"Many are reported so, but not all are dead. Some day perhaps a search will find Englishmen left behind in Germany. Your Major Graham is one—I gave him water when he was wounded, and no woman would have pity, and he thanked me and said I was 'a good chap,' and smiled as you smile, Mademoiselle, so I remember him. But the Count that used to shoot at Calgarloch Castle had a spite against your father, and returned him 'killed.' "

The tower room swam with Joey for a moment; she felt sick and queer.

"I say, you're not going to faint or anything

rotten like that, are you?" cried Noreen; "because it's a beastly damp place to do it in."

"Don't, Noreen, it's her pater." That was Gabrielle speaking. Joey pulled herself together.

"I'm all right—only it's . . . it's so heavenly. *Did* you hear, Father's *alive!*"

Noreen seized her round the waist. "Yes, I heard, and it wasn't heartlessness, only you did look funny for a minute. Joey, I *am* glad; and isn't it queer and topping that everything's gone and happened like this. If there had been no flood, or John had driven us to Deeping Royal as he intended, we should have been up the twin towers with the rest, and you would never have heard this."

"And if I hadn't been caught in the sea-roke that Sunday, and known you were down the trap-door, I shouldn't have known where to look for you when you called 'Help!'" Joey said to Jean Corvette.

"And if you had not risked your life to rescue me, Mademoiselle Joey, I should never have talked again," he said.

"And if we hadn't been Joey's special friends and waited for her at the reservoir, I suppose the old Professor would have got away, and most of this wouldn't have happened," Gabrielle suggested seriously. "We're all very wet, and Ma-

tron *will* be cross to-morrow; but it's all been gloriously worth while."

"Hasn't it just!" Joey cried ecstatically. "And now, if Jean doesn't mind, let's get up that ladder. You bet John will be looking out for us as soon as he has settled the Professor, and I know he had some plan when he said he would drive him."

Jean made no objection, though he was still too much exhausted to go with them. But the three friends, undeterred by wet and clinging garments, climbed the shaky ladders to what was left of the top floor of the tower, where they found the electric torch which Jean must have used lying close under a loop-hole window.

"Of course a torch-flash isn't easy to read in daylight, but there's no sun, and it's getting darker," Joey suggested.

"Then it must be past high tide," Noreen said joyfully. The three stood at the loop-hole, looking out for a minute in silence over the dreary grey waste of water. A wicker hen-coop and a large bath-tub washed aimlessly about near the walls of their refuge, farther off a poor drowned sheep showed, half submerged.

Gabrielle put her arm through Joey's. "We might have been drowned too," she said, "and instead we're all right, and your father's alive."

Joey couldn't answer that for a second: then

she said huskily, "Thanks awfully, and I *am* glad we're all in it together."

"And always will be for ever and ever, Amen," chipped in Noreen the irrepressible. "Gabrielle will be Upper School next term, Miss Craigie thinks, but she'll never desert the alliance, I know. It's going to be for always."

"I say, I am jolly glad I came to Redlands," Joey said from her heart.

They took turns after that to work the torch, sending S.O.S. signals out into the wet world, while the tide steadily sucked back and back, leaving the tops of the white posts uncovered once more. And then over the grey waste a boat came, and they tore down the ladders at a break-neck pace to welcome John, rowed by a sturdy policeman.

"What's happened to him—the Professor?" shrieked Noreen, as soon as the boat came into hailing distance.

"Oh, you're all right, you three, thank goodness!" John sent back, as he steered the boat carefully for the tower door. "I felt rather jumpy about you, when the sea burst in. But I might have known Joey would come out top. The Professor?—oh, he is safely in the lock-up, with his violet handkerchief—which it seems is the secret insignia of his crowd—and his precious bugs. The flood was really a convenience, other-

wise I meant to run my car into a ditch, and have him that way if poss. As it was, the tide burst in and swamped us, and he can't swim and was in a blue funk of drowning, so I had no bother at all. Just left him hanging on to the car, without his bugs, revolver, or hanky, and swam for help. I could have waded, of course, but swimming was easier for my game leg, and more impressive. And they're all right at Deeping Royal; they're sending boats. So you have nothing to do, but to let us get you back to Redlands."

Hanging on to the door, Joey stooped to whisper to John. "John, be nice to this man here, because he's told me Father is alive in Germany."

"What, your pater alive after all! Top-hole!" John said. "That *will* be something to tell Aunt Greta!"

Joey looked back at the Round Tower, as she and the rest were rowed quickly away from it. How little she had guessed, when she had first come to Redlands, and looked at it with so much interest, what it would mean to her!

That night, while a disapproving Matron, armed with an immense bottle of sal volatile, stood by, urging bed for everyone, Joey Graham was cheered at tea by the entire school.

CHAPTER XXII

THE GREAT ELECTION

IT was wonderfully quiet in the Queen's Hall, considering that six hundred girls were assembled there. Of course, there was not the absolute pin-drop silence of the times when Miss Conyngham read prayers, but that was not to be expected because The Election—(it was always *the* Election at Redlands)—was in progress. For the last hour there had been a steady tramp of feet going to and returning from the platform on which there sat in silent dignity the “Heads of the Upper and Lower School.”

Before each was a large waste-paper basket, and into one or other of those receptacles each girl dropped a folded paper containing the name of a candidate for the highest dignity the school could offer.

The Head of the Upper School must be chosen from the Upper or the Lower Sixth; the Head of the Lower from Remove II. A or B, that was the one restriction. It gave a choice of forty girls in the Upper School and of sixty in the Lower. Every College girl had the right

to vote, with the exception of the retiring dignitaries; even Tiddles had her buff slip, and was laboriously printing something on it with a much-sucked pencil. No Redlands girl would have forgone the privilege of voting for the world.

Six weeks had gone by since that exciting 31st of October; six wonderful weeks for Joey. Weeks when extraordinary things happened; among others a day in town with Colonel Sturt (who wasn't gruff at all) and with Cousin Greta, when she was taken to the War Office to answer the keen, interested questions of a couple of splendid-looking staff officers, who were very kind to her, and promised that the business of searching for her father should be put in hand without a second's delay. They shook hands with Joey, and congratulated her when they had finished. She went to lunch at the Ritz afterwards, feeling deliriously happy, and much older. The only bar to her perfect bliss was the fact that she might not tell Mums about that wonderful hope forthwith. Cousin Greta said it would be cruel, until the hope was a certainty, and Cousin Greta had been so wonderfully kind and understanding of late that Joey felt sure she must be right. Still not even the lovely little gold wrist-watch bracelet which her cousin chose for her in Bond Street, when lunch was over, could make up for having to keep silence to

Mums. It was a better consolation when Lady Greta said she was going to ask Mums down for the "Old Girls' Day" at the end of the term, so that Joey could show her the school and her friends, and they could travel back to Scotland together. Joey thought it would be a particularly pleasant thing to show the school to Mums just now, when everyone was being so extraordinarily nice to her. Even Ingrid Latimer and her friend Joan Chichester, that big Sixth Former who had put Joey on the table the day that she and Gabby and Noreen were going to meet Miss Craigie, condescended to a good deal of notice. Joey felt her cup of pride would brim over if she could bring Mums up to these majestic people and say, carelessly, "I'd like you to know my mother," as she had heard Joan Chichester do when her people came down at Mid-term. Of course, in old days it would have been unheard-of cheek for any member of the Lower School, except for Gabrielle, who breakfasted with Miss Conyngham when school matters needed attention, and could say, "I say, Ingrid, oughtn't we . . ."

It was that "we" which was so wonderful, really; much more so than breakfasting with the Head!

Still, for all she was a mere Remover II. B girl, Ingrid had been most uncommonly gracious

since the flood; Joey thought that one might perhaps risk an introduction, and thanked Cousin Greta warmly.

Cousin Greta patted her hand. "And I hope you will have a little welcome to spare for your old cousin too, my dear; for I want to come too, and to bring Gracie as well as John."

"Oh, are you coming? How topping!" Joey cried, and the remark was quite truthful as far as Cousin Greta and John were concerned, though Joey wasn't quite sure how she felt about Gracie. And then Cousin Greta said something so astounding that it took her breath away.

"Joey, I want you to be kind to Gracie and show her round the school, because—she is coming to Redlands as a weekly boarder next term."

"*What?*" Joey had jerked out, forgetting manners. Gracie at Redlands, being talked to candidly by people like Noreen and Syb and Barbara! It was hard to picture.

"Yes, she is coming," Cousin Greta repeated, with a smile. "Her father and I both think that Redlands will be good for Gracie. You are not such a bad specimen of a Redlands girl, you know."

"You should see Ingrid—wish she weren't leaving," Joey told her, with conviction; "and Noreen and Gabrielle. Now they *are* toppers."

Lady Greta smiled, and said she would take

Joey's word for it; but Joey must bring any of her special friends that she liked with her to Mote, subject, of course, to Miss Conyng-ham's permission. Altogether life had been extraordinarily pleasant during the last six weeks.

Jean Corvette was to go back to the home which was not any longer under the German heel. Joey's faith in Colonel Sturt's power "to put it right" for the poor fellow had been justified. She never knew what Colonel Sturt said to the police and the War Office, or they to him; but the fact remained that Jean's unwilling share in the Professor's plots and plans was all condoned, and he was to go back to Alsace with Mademoiselle de Lavernais at the end of the term.

Mademoiselle's departure was an open secret by the time that was settled, and most of the girls were sorry, in spite of their not infrequent grumbles at her strictness. It was Joey who suggested to Gabrielle the idea of a farewell offering from the Lower School, but the whole of the Lower School jumped at it, and also at Joey's further plan of learning the "Marseillaise" properly in French, so that "Maddy" should realise the alliance between France and England was a reality even where schoolgirls were concerned. All Remove II. B contributed a shilling per girl—not bad when the end of the

term and Christmas were near—the junior forms sixpence, and the kindergarten babies three-pence. The result was a highly respectable sum, which was entrusted to the hands of Gabrielle, who went to Lincoln with Miss Craigie and bought a beautiful leather dispatch case, fitted with every luxury. And Clare, shuddering occasionally, but very valiant on the whole, drummed the difficult tune and time of the “Marseillaise” into the most unmusical members of the Lower School; it being a point of honour that everyone should sing.

The presentation to Maddy was to take place after voting; Miss Craigie, taken into confidence, had promised to arrange that Maddy should be in the kindergarten playroom, even if she had to drag her there, directly the election was over. The “counting” only concerned the retiring officers, Ingrid and Gabrielle, out of all the girls, and Gabrielle had delegated to Joey her position of spokesman and presenter of the dispatch case and list of subscribers. There would be no time if they waited till after dinner, she said; the “Old Girls” who always came to the Christmas Breaking-Up would surround Maddy, and leave no one else a chance to speak to her.

So the Lower School, with the exception of its Head, surged towards the kindergarten playroom, as soon as they left Queen’s Hall, Joey

only pausing to seize the dispatch case, with the enormous list of names in all hand-writings tied to its handle and fluttering out from it like a great black and white banner, and to bring it along with her.

Miss Craigie had kept her promise faithfully. "Maddy" was there in the kindergarten with her, rusty as to front, and shabby as to dress as ever, but somehow younger, Joey thought, than she had been on that dreadful day when Joey asked her to "amuse" the class with stories of the Franco-Prussian War.

Maddy looked round, surprised, as the Lower School poured in, and made a hasty movement towards the farther door. Maddy was known to loathe a noise! But Miss Craigie held her arm firmly and gave her no opportunity of flight. The Lower School fell into an immense horse-shoe, in treble rows, the little ones in front, then the next size, then the tallest. Maddy and Miss Craigie were left inside.

Clare scuffled to the piano, and struck a chord, and the Lower School crashed joyfully into the "Marseillaise," all singing at the tops of their voices. Maddy bore it, though some of the pronunciation was, to say the least of it, eccentric, and Rhoda Watson, who had about as much music in her as a cow, was shrieking into her left ear half a tone flat throughout.

Joey advanced the moment that the music stopped. "Please, Mademoiselle, we learnt that for you," she said, "to show we're your friends, if you'll have us, just as France and England are friends, for ever and ever. We're frightfully sorry you're going away, and will you please accept this dispatch case, with a lot of love from the Lower School?"

"That's the list of us," she added hastily, as the huge paper nearly obscured the dispatch case altogether. "I'm sorry it's such an out-size, but you see some of the kids write so large, and we all wanted to sign."

Mademoiselle de Lavernais took the dispatch case from Joey. There was a queer look in her tired black eyes for a moment. "Thank you, Joey, I would not have the paper smaller," she said.

She stood quite silent for a moment; then began to speak in her level voice that had hardly a hint of foreign pronunciation about it.

"To say thank you is a little thing, to feel thanks warmly through you is a bigger. I carry that warmth with me for the rest of my life—and there was a time when I was not only glad because I was going back to my own country, but because I was leaving Redlands. Now that is not so. I leave Redlands with regret, but I shall carry in my heart the memory of it, and of

you all. And that is something to bring back with me to a home from which a little girl, as young as Tiddles, was driven more than fifty years ago. Now that I am so near going back, I dare again allow myself to see the picture of the burning château, the flames rising behind the trees, and my nursery a blackened shell, as the front wall fell forward. I see my cot against the wall, my doll's house, black with flaming edge . . . myself crying pitifully, but at the same time thankful to my father who permitted me to bury my cherished dolls in the hole he had dug to preserve our heirlooms from the conquering German. My father himself fired the château that no German should pollute it, and went out homeless into the wide world, deserting all, sooner than live under German rule. I kissed my little hands to my beloved dolls, down in the garden mould, whispering, with the faith of childhood, that I would soon come back and dig them up again. And after one-and-fifty years I keep that promise. I go back alone, the last of all my family, to the home of my childhood; but I shall not be lonely in that I take with me the love of the Lower School."

After that came dinner, a hasty and somewhat noisy affair, when mistresses made no particular

effort to keep order, and no one talked of anything but the Election.

Ingrid and Gabrielle came in rather late; Joey tried to catch Gabrielle's eye and show her there was room to squeeze in between herself and Noreen; but Gabrielle, looking flushed and excited, only smiled at her in answer to the invitation, and sat down at the far end of the table. And after dinner there was the scramble to dress, to the tune of rumbling wheels and snorting cars, as the old girls and the more ordinary visitors poured up in an unending stream.

Then the prize-giving—one side of the Queen's Hall entirely filled with excited girls in best frocks, the other with visitors of all ages; old girls conspicuous among them by their proprietary air.

The school list read, as it would stand with the beginning of the new term, going from the babies in the kindergarten up to the high and mighty Sixth. Noreen and Joey in Remove II. A. Gabrielle in the Upper School, the youngest girl there by a whole year. Barbara heading Remove II. B. Syb second. The prospects for the next term were great indeed, with the junior hockey team colours for Joey and Noreen, to add to all the rest.

Then the prize-giving—an armful to Gabrielle,

but Remove II. B Maths. for Joey, and composition to Noreen. They grudged nobody else anything in the world after that, and Joey wanted nothing but that her people should be there. Cousin Greta had 'phoned that Mums had business in town last night, and would not come to Mote till to-day; but Joey had never thought she would be late for the prize-giving. Still she couldn't see the door from where she sat; Mums and Cousin Greta and John and Gracie might be standing among the group there who had come in late, and would not disturb the performance by moving about to find seats.

Prize-giving on Old Girls' Day always concluded with the singing of Newbolt's stirring verses, "The Best School of All," sung only by collegers, past and present, standing. After that would come the great announcement—the result of the Election for the coming year.

As the first bars were played there was a stir and a movement among the audience. In little groups—in single state—people were standing up. The years had rolled away from these; they were Redlanders again each one of them, from shy Jean Hyde, who had only left last term, to old Lady Rownham, quite blind and bent with rheumatism, but who would never dream of forgetting that she had been a Redlands girl seventy years ago.

Visitors sat to listen to the great school song; old girls stood to sing with the school, and for five blissful minutes forgot everything—except that they were back at Redlands, and Redlands' was theirs, and they were Redlands' still.

Newbolt's splendid words rang out to their slow, grave marching tune.

"It's good to see the school we knew,
The land of youth and dream,
To greet again the rule we knew
Before we took the stream.
Though long we've missed the sight of her
Our hearts may not forget,
We've lost the old delight of her,
We'll keep her honour yet."

Girls and old girls had got into their swing by now; the great hall rang!

"To speak of Fame a venture is,
There's little here may bide,
But we may face the centuries,
And dare the deepening tide.
For though the dust that's part of us
To dust again be gone,
Yet here shall beat the heart of us,
The school we handed on.

We'll honour yet the school we knew,
The best school of all,
We'll honour yet the rule we knew,
Till the last bell call.

For working-days and holidays,
And glad or melancholy days,
They were great days and jolly days,
At the best school of all."

Lady Rownham was singing with all her might, and a pathetic effort to hold her slight stooping shoulders back; she had been Vicereine of India forty years ago, but, excepting for that time, there had been few years in which she had missed coming to the Old Girls' Day—and no time when she had not been at Redlands in spirit. They had sung rather cramped mid-Victorian words as the school song for many of those yearly festivals that she had known; but in these very "Old Girls" had beat the heart of the school none the less, though that earlier poet had lacked the greatness of expression.

The last line swung out with triumphant fervour; the old girls sat down. Miss Conyngham stood forward; on her right were the two retiring officers, Ingrid and Gabrielle, one very tall, the other small and childish looking. Amid an absolute silence from the assembled visitors Miss Conyngham shook hands with each girl in turn. "We all thank you for what you have done for the school throughout the year," she said.

At Redlands it was always the youngest girl at the school who called the cheers. A huge Sixth Former had Tiddles ready beside the plat-

form and hoisted her on to it at the right moment. The mite faced the audience unblinkingly, "Tree cheers for Ingrid Latimer! Tree cheers for Gabrielle Arden!" she said in her tiny distinct voice. It did not reach half the length of the hall, but everyone who had been at a "Redlands speaker" knew what was meant by the appearance on the platform of the youngest girl, and the cheers rang out with a will. Ingrid and Gabrielle acknowledged them with a grave bow, and then turned and walked off the platform and down to their respective places in the hall, leaving only the youngest girl in the school to stand by Miss Conyngham's side.

A sealed envelope lay before the Head upon the table. She took it up in her long slim fingers.

"I have now to announce the result of the Election," she said, speaking slowly and clearly, so that her voice reached every corner of the great hall. "I do not need to remind our old girls what that election means to Redlands; it is the visible expression of perfect trust; it means that in the girl chosen to govern the Upper or the Lower School the other girls feel they have someone in whose hands can be safely placed the honour of the school. It is a great trust and a great privilege: the heads of the Upper and Lower School are my right hand, and in their

choice I have never found the school's judgment in fault. The great Election took place this morning; the results were checked by the retiring officers and two mistresses, and the successful names handed to me in this envelope, which I now propose to unseal before you all."

She ripped it open and spread out the paper it contained.

A pin could have been heard to drop as she gave out the result of the Election.

"Head of the Upper School—*Joan Chichester*.
Head of the Lower School—*Jocelyn Graham*."

Joey sitting fizzling with excitement between Noreen and Barbara nearly fell off her form in sheer unbelieving amazement.

"What! it's not me that's it," she whispered frantically, with a lack of grammar that would have horrified Mr. Craigie away at Calgarloch. Noreen gave her a friendly push. "You're not deaf are you, you juggins. Of course it's you. I thought it might be and I'm jolly glad. I voted for you anyway, and so did Syb and Barbara."

Joey feverishly squeezed a hand of both her neighbours. "You are dears!" she said unsteadily.

Ingrid looked round, the Head of the Upper School still, for all she had resigned her dignities. "No talking there!"

"The newly elected officers will come on to the platform," said Miss Conyngham.

Joey arrived on the platform, still feeling rather giddy, and as though she must be someone else, and Miss Conyngham pinned to her frock the little gold star brooch that was her badge of office, and then shook hands.

"I congratulate you, Jocelyn. I think the honour is well earned; I know it will be treated faithfully."

She turned from Joey to Joan Chichester, and invested her. Joey ought to have been standing at attention by that enormous and distinguished personage, whom it was so astounding to think about as the colleague to whom in the future one would say "we." But she was not doing what she ought. From the platform she could see the group by the door, and what she saw put everything else out of her head for the minute—even this wonderful new dignity.

Cousin Greta was there, with Colonel Sturt and Gracie, the latter looking far less superior; and John, jolly and cheery as ever, and leaning on one crutch only instead of two. And beside them Mums, and a tall khaki figure, worn and thin and hollow-eyed; but unmistakable—*Father!*

Their eyes met; it was only by a supreme ef-

fort that Joey forced herself to stand still on the platform and listen to the wonderful things that Miss Conyngham was saying about her.

"To Collegers past and present the election of the Heads of the Upper and Lower School is of supreme importance," she said. "The splendid record of Joan Chichester is well known to us all; we have no doubt as to her fitness for the honour accorded her by Redlands. Jocelyn Graham is a new girl this term, and never before in the history of Redlands has this honour been conferred on a new girl. I am glad that Redlands has broken its tradition in that respect. A great opportunity came to Jocelyn Graham six weeks ago—and she showed herself able to meet it. We are proud of her at Redlands, and believe that in her lives the spirit that has always actuated the Heads of the Upper and Lower School—the spirit which has set our school where it is: a name to be honoured wherever in the world a Redlands girl is found.

The big Sixth Former did not need to touch little Tiddles on this occasion; she was ready.

"Tree cheers for the new Heads of the Upper and Lower School!"

They finished at last, though Noreen, the experienced, declared that there never had been such cheering at Redlands, and Joey could dive

through the throng, moving teawards, to her people.

Father had come to town last night, and Mums, to whom the wonderful news that Jean Corvette's Major Graham was the right one, had been wired as soon as it was a certainty, and who had met him there. They hadn't wired to Joey, because Mums, who knew what was going to happen on that last day, thought the excitement would be upsetting, and she had better know nothing till Father was there.

"Though it was a shame, when it all came about through you, Joey," Mums said.

"Isn't it funny?" Joey remarked blissfully. "It's like the house that Jack built—all going back and back. If I hadn't wanted the scholarship I wouldn't have come to Redlands, and if Miss Craigie hadn't had 'flu,' I should have travelled with her, and Noreen wouldn't have ragged me about the Lab, and I shouldn't have found out about the violet handkerchief, and if Gracie had been like she is now, John wouldn't have taught me signalling, and I shouldn't have come back alone, and if Noreen and Gabrielle hadn't been such bricks and waited for me at the reservoir . . ."

"Yes," interrupted Father, "and if my eldest daughter hadn't been out to keep her promise

like an Englishman and take care of Mums, I suppose she wouldn't have fagged for the scholarship, and then there would have been no beginning, middle,—or very glorious end.”

THE END

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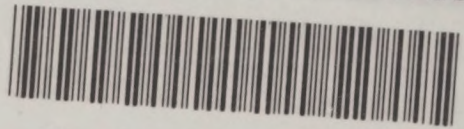
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